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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA



House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 146 • NUMBER 008 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, June 14, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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FRIDAY, 14 JUNE 2011

HOUSE OF COMMONS
DEBATE

Friday, June 14, 2011

House of Commons Debate

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 14, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[English]

PUBLIC SECTOR INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: I have the honour, pursuant to section 38 of the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, to lay upon the table the report of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011.

[Translation]

This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

* * *

TLICHO AGREEMENT

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2005-09 progress report of the Tlicho agreement implementation committee.

* * *

[English]

GWICH'IN COMPREHENSIVE LAND CLAIM AGREEMENT

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2008-09 annual report of the implementation committee on the Gwich'in comprehensive land claim agreement.

[Translation]

SAHTU DENE AND METIS COMPREHENSIVE LAND CLAIM AGREEMENT

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2008-09 annual report of the implementation committee on the Sahtu Dene and Métis comprehensive land claim agreement.

* * *

[English]

INUVIALUIT FINAL AGREEMENT

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2008-09 annual report of the Inuvialuit final agreement implementation coordinating committee.

* * *

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE SENIORS AND STRENGTHENING CANADA'S ECONOMY ACT

Hon. Ted Menzies (for the Minister of Finance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-3, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CANADA SHIPPING ACT, 2001

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-211, An Act to amend the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 (prohibition against oil tankers in Dixon Entrance, Hecate Strait and Queen Charlotte Sound).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I stand today to re-introduce my private member's bill to permanently ban transportation of oil by oil supertankers off British Columbia's north coast.

Routine Proceedings

We must protect British Columbia's rugged northern coastline and coastal waters, the diversity of fish species and mammals, and the coastal communities that depend on a healthy fishing industry and a profitable ecotourism sector.

My bill would amend the Canada Shipping Act by prohibiting the transportation of oil in oil tankers along the north coast of British Columbia, specifically in the Dixon Entrance, Hecate Strait and Queen Charlotte Sound. A major spill on the north coast would be catastrophic to the ecosystem and would negatively affect the economy in this area. It simply is not worth the risk.

I encourage all members of this House to support my bill and legislate an immediate ban on oil supertankers off the north coast of B.C.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-212, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (luring a child outside Canada).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to re-introduce legislation to strengthen the laws to protect children against child luring and abuse.

The legislation would make it illegal for any Canadian citizen or permanent resident to lure a child outside the borders of Canada.

The bill, if passed, would close a loophole in the Criminal Code. It would also make prosecution possible here at home.

I encourage all members of this House to support this bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

• (1010)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-213, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (means of communication for child luring).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise again to reintroduce legislation to strengthen laws to protect children against child luring and abuse. The legislation would expand the definition of "child luring" to include all forms of electronic communication, be it a cellular telephone or any other communication device. The legislation would provide law enforcement and the courts with additional tools to protect children from predators and would, again, close a loophole in the Criminal Code.

I encourage all members of this House to adopt the bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

PETITIONS

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present a petition on behalf of literally thousands of

Canadians from all across Canada who call upon Parliament to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known. In fact, they point out that more Canadians now die from asbestos than from all other industrial causes combined and yet they criticize the fact that the Government of Canada is still one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world. They suggest that we are exporting human misery on a monumental scale.

The petitioners also point out that Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry. These petitioners call this corporate welfare for corporate serial killers.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to ban asbestos in all of its forms and to institute a just transition program for asbestos workers who may be laid off as a result. They also call upon government to end all government subsidies of asbestos, both in Canada and abroad.

Finally, the petitioners call upon the government to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention that is coming up later this month and which Canada consistently sabotages with teams of Department of Justice lawyers like globe-trotting propagandists for the asbestos industry. They insist that the Government of Canada stops this promoting of asbestos.

SENIORS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition on behalf of constituents and others who are, in essence, calling upon the government to increase support to our seniors in terms of pensions.

Canadians are very much aware, in terms of the policy direction of the government, of it prioritizing things such as corporation tax breaks while, at the same time, not providing the necessary funds in order for many of our seniors to have a decent lifestyle.

The petitioners are asking the government to look at ways in which it can increase pensions.

It was a pleasure to bring this petition before this chamber.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1015)

[English]

LIBYA

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC) moved:

That, in standing in solidarity with those seeking freedom in Libya, the House unanimously adopted a motion in the Third Session of the 40th Parliament on March 21, 2011, authorizing all necessary measures, including the use of the Canadian Forces and military assets in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973; and given that the House unanimously agreed that should the government require an extension to the involvement of the Canadian Forces for more than three months from the passage of the said motion, the government was to return to the House at its earliest opportunity to debate and seek the consent of the House for such an extension; therefore the House consents to another extension of three and a half months of the involvement of the Canadian Forces in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1973; that the House deplors the ongoing use of violence by the Libyan regime against the Libyan people, including the alleged use of rape as a weapon of war by the Libyan regime; that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and the Standing Committee on National Defence remain seized of Canada's activities under UNSC Resolution 1973; and that the House continues to offer its wholehearted support to the brave men and women of the Canadian Forces who stand on guard for all of us.

He said: Mr. Speaker, before I begin my formal remarks, I once again thank the people of Ottawa West—Nepean for their confidence and trust. I will work tirelessly on their behalf each and every day.

It is an honour to stand in this place and speak to the motion before us. It is an honour because I am proud of the part that Canada has played in the mission to protect the Libyan people from their rulers. It is a mission that is not over yet. The push for a more free and fair Libya is a cause that is not yet achieved, so Canada and its international partners must continue to show resolve, patience and determination to go the distance and help Libyans secure their future.

We must extend our military mission there, we must redouble our diplomatic efforts and we must continue to increase humanitarian aid. That is what our government proposes going forward. The hon. members who will speak for the government over the course of today's debate will elaborate on a suite of actions that we are proposing.

[Translation]

While the citizens of Libya contemplate and prepare for the establishment of a constitutional state, modern and respectful of human rights, Colonel Gadhafi, without the slightest concern for his country, is practising a true scorched-earth policy. We continue to believe that without the intervention of the international community and the adoption of resolution 1973, Benghazi, the home of the opposition who were within range of Gadhafi's forces in March, would have been utterly devastated.

Remember the threat launched by Gadhafi himself: "The decision has been made. Get ready, we are coming tonight," he said in an audio message sent to Benghazi and broadcast on Libyan television.

He promised to search "house by house" and to show no mercy. However, because of our decisive action, Benghazi today is a vibrant community that, through the strength of its partnership projects, is inspiring to all who observe it.

[English]

Canada has been vocal in condemning the targeting of civilians by the Gadhafi regime and the impact of that regime's actions on the hundreds of thousands of people who have been trapped in Libya or, worse yet, forced to flee its borders.

This regime has chosen to wage war against its own people. In the face of this blatant disregard for both human rights and international law, Canada has demanded that the regime halt its attacks against its own people and ensure that perpetrators of crimes are brought to justice.

We have been particularly disgusted by abhorrent reports that Gadhafi and his thugs are using torture and sexual violence, rape, as weapons against the Libyan population. Such actions are international crimes and may be war crimes or crimes against humanity.

Canada calls for a full and impartial investigation of these serious allegations, so that the perpetrators can be brought to justice.

Canada has made significant contributions to humanitarian aid already, as my colleague will no doubt later detail. Let me say at this juncture that we are certainly prepared to do more. I am pleased to announce on behalf of my colleague, the Minister of International Cooperation, that Canada is prepared to commit an additional \$2 million in humanitarian aid for Libya. A portion of this funding will go directly to support victims of sexual violence as a tool of war. I know this is something that all parties have called for and have supported. I appreciate their wise counsel.

On March 31, this House pledged, through a unanimous motion, its support for Canada's engagement in military operations in Libya. The men and women of the Canadian Forces, working under UN sanction, have helped to avert humanitarian tragedies in eastern Libya, and they have significantly limited the regime's capacity to launch indiscriminate attacks on the innocent civilian population in the east.

The Minister of National Defence will speak more to other achievements, but as important each of these victories is, they are only stepping stones on the way to ending, in a permanent way, the capacity of this regime to wage war against its own people. We must press on.

From the outset of this crisis in Libya, Canada has supported a swift and decisive international response to this crisis. Not only did we implement United Nations Security Council resolution 1970 quickly, but we extended it further under the Special Economic Measures Act, freezing regime assets, putting in place a travel ban on regime members, and an arms embargo.

We committed fully to the enforcement of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1973, which calls for an immediate ceasefire, an arms embargo, increased sanctions, and a no-fly zone to protect civilians.

Canada was among the first to call for the UN Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court and strongly supported the creation of an international commission of inquiry into violations of basic human rights.

Government Orders

The preliminary results of these inquiries have confirmed the seriousness of the crimes that are being committed. The report of the international commission of inquiry stated that these crimes are such as to indicate a policy directed by Gadhafi himself and his inner circle.

Colonel Gadhafi seeks to remain in power by committing crimes against the people. He needs to be stopped and he needs to be held accountable. He is a clear and present threat both to his people and to the stability of the region, including the emerging and promising democracies of Tunisia and Egypt.

I would note that Canada's end game is shared by our G8 partners as expressed at Deauville earlier this month. Canada's engagement has been the result of a concentrated whole of government effort. Abroad we have worked closely with international and regional partners, the League of Arab States, the African Union, and NATO partners and allies to press the regime to comply with its international obligation.

Canada has been a member of the Libya Contact Group since its inaugural meeting in Doha, Qatar in April. We participated in subsequent meetings in Rome and in Abu Dhabi last week where Canada was represented by my colleague, the associate minister of National Defence. The contact group is an organization of like-minded nations that is helping to provide leadership and to coordinate international efforts with regard to the future of Libya.

• (1020)

After three months of energetic diplomatic, military, and humanitarian engagement, the world's resolve to protect the civilians of Libya against attacks and threat of attacks from the Gadhafi regime, regrettably, has not faded. It is gaining momentum.

However, our work is far from over and so we must look at doing more in terms of humanitarian aid. We must continue our military assault on Gadhafi's command and control centres. We must also take a more robust and principled approach diplomatically if our mission is truly to succeed. Increasing our diplomatic efforts is what I would like to touch on here.

[Translation]

I am pleased to inform the House that Canada is embarking on an enhanced engagement strategy with the national transitional council of Libya, or NTC.

• (1025)

[English]

As part of this strategy, Canada will recognize the NTC as the legitimate representative of the Libyan people going forward. Our government will engage with institutions and representatives of the NTC. I will be seeking a meeting with my counterparts on the NTC, the vice-chairman and its ambassador to the United Nations. We will identify members of the NTC responsible for domestic issues and propose meetings with their Canadian counterparts.

We will also happily arrange meetings between NTC members and hon. members of this place. I know this was an engagement suggestion that was called on by my colleague in the Liberal Party, the member for Beauséjour.

We welcome the efforts of the national transitional council in defining core driving principles through its vision for a democratic Libya and its blueprint for building a post-Gadhafi Libya, the road map for Libya, outlining a transition process based on inclusiveness and based on balanced representation.

We will maintain an ongoing dialogue with the NTC to identify Libya's most pressing needs now and into the future. We will do all we can to link the NTC with Canadian expertise on governance and on civil society issues.

We hope this is the start of stronger ties between Canada and the Libyan people, and a brighter, better future for the country as a whole. The decision of this House to extend Canadian participation in the NATO mission should be accompanied by the steps outlined above, and more to come. By doing so, we will send a clear message that we are committed to fulfilling the United Nation's mandate and that we are willing to uphold our commitment to provide protection and assistance to those most vulnerable and to those most in need.

The Libya mission came out about in a unique set of circumstances. The threat to the civilian population, the threat of a massacre in Benghazi was real and imminent, coming from the mouths of the Libyan leaders themselves. The capability existed to intervene. Military assets were available and the geography made it possible. In regional terms, Libya represented and continues to represent a threat to the success of other nascent political openings in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere.

That is why the Arab League had called for action. It is why the international community, including Canada, was compelled to respond. The track record of the Gadhafi regime, of over 40 years of unpredictability and interference in the affairs of the states of Africa and the Middle East, was cause for real concern for the future.

Our strategy is clear. By applying steady and unrelenting military and diplomatic pressure, while also delivering humanitarian assistance, we can protect the civilian population, degrade the capabilities of the regime, and create the conditions for a genuine political opening. At the same time we can bolster the capacity of the Libyan opposition to meet the challenges of a post-Gadhafi Libya and to lay the foundations of a state based on the sovereignty of the people.

In conclusion, the government understands the genuine concerns of Canadians who oppose the use of lethal force and of turning to military action to resolve the problems of the international community. I believe this is an instinct that all Canadians share and is a credit to us all.

At the same time, we have a responsibility to act when we can, when our objectives are right, when our objectives are clear, to protect and to assist those who share the values and would share the institutions for which many of our ancestors gave up their lives so that we could enjoy the benefits.

Since the Libyan uprising began in February, the world community has borne witness to the tremendous courage, sacrifice and dignity of the Libyan people, and of their determination to open a new chapter in the history of their country. The Libyan people are desperate to secure a brighter future. To help secure this future, Canada must play its part.

Let us all strongly reaffirm today that Canada, along with the international community, stands in solidarity with the legitimate and irreversible aspirations of the Libyan people.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his comments.

I want to preface my comments by thanking the people of Ottawa Centre for returning me to the House. I thank them for their trust in me.

There are a couple of things that the government said are important to note and I would like to ask the minister a couple of questions about the announcement that he has made.

Many are concerned about the status of the crisis in Libya and that it has become solely a military operation. I was heartened to hear the government say that this is absolutely about the UN resolution, strengthening diplomacy and humanitarian assistance.

I particularly want to ask about assistance to support victims who have suffered from rape and the investigation of those allegations. My question is not only with regard to support but what the government intends to do regarding prosecution and how that would work.

Could the minister give more detail to the House and to Canadians as to how the government will follow-up on the allegations of rape as a weapon of war?

• (1030)

Hon. John Baird: Madam Speaker, I thank the member from Ottawa Centre for the question and congratulate him on his appointment as critic of foreign affairs for the official opposition.

I think we all agree on the importance of this being a United Nations sanctioned effort. Yes, there is a very strong military aspect to it authorized by the United Nations. However, I think it goes without saying that we must take a diplomatic and humanitarian approach to the effort as well.

The government is committed to expanding its efforts diplomatically. This will be a major part of the solution and we acknowledge that. I certainly thank both opposition parties for their counsel on that.

With respect to humanitarian assistance, there is a real need as there is real suffering going on. Therefore, today we have announced \$2 million in additional funds to support humanitarian efforts.

The issue of rape being used as a weapon of war I think is abhorrent to every Canadian. The government would like to put some effort not just on the social side of providing assistance to victims of this heinous crime but also at the International Criminal Court. We must send a message when this is coordinated as an act of war that the international community will hold those accountable. That is something every Canadian strongly believes in and which this government will work with the International Criminal Court to support.

The Minister of International Cooperation has recently put great effort into this issue. This is of significant concern to all members in the House and one in which Canada will put effort and focus.

Government Orders

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, I was very pleased to hear the minister talk about some of the new initiatives the government is planning. I can tell that the government anticipates the amendments our party will be moving this morning to the motion. I think they will be entirely compatible with what is being proposed.

I want to make sure that the minister understands that to move forward on the diplomatic front, as he has suggested, to move forward with the recognition of the Libyan national council as a legitimate political entity, as a representative of the Libyan people, and provide governance assistance, as well as add our support to the International Criminal Court, that these initiatives have to be matched by funds.

On the governance field, in particular, I can tell the minister that one of the central problems is that neither his department nor CIDA have a clear mandate with respect to Canadian assistance on governance. This whole area of governance has fallen into a black hole between those two departments. I would plead with the minister to investigate this question.

If we are going to deal with governance, which in this party we strongly believe we have to, then we need to support those institutions in the country as well as within government in order to provide that governance assistance, in this case, to the Libyan national council, and there are many other examples where it needs to be done.

Adding to the humanitarian and diplomatic work of Canada is exactly the direction we have been urging the government to go. I very much appreciate the minister's comments today on that score.

• (1035)

Hon. John Baird: Madam Speaker, let me say to the leader of the Liberal Party, I appreciate his counsel and thoughts on this issue, both in this place and earlier, and also the engagement of the member for Beauséjour on this issue. I share his view that supporting good governance by the council will be important, and I will certainly take his counsel with respect to how that can best be supported by Canada, whether it is a whole of government approach or through other institutions in Canada or internationally. I will certainly take his wise counsel under advisement.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the minister on his speech and for bringing this issue before Parliament, allowing us an opportunity to debate the relevance of and need to extend this mission by another 90 days.

I appreciate his comments that we want to make sure that we can provide support for governance, to help them mature the next government that comes into play, and to make sure that we address the issue of humanitarian assistance.

Really, what we are talking about is that the situation still requires some military action, because we have to make conditions right to be able to get the relief agencies on the ground to provide that humanitarian assistance and to put the diplomats in place, so that we can provide that instruction on governance in helping the Libyans transition as they go through this change, we hope, away from Colonel Gadhafi and his regime.

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I want the minister to address that need and to talk about the leadership that Canada is showing in the NATO alliance, with the air strikes being orchestrated under the command of General Bouchard, and talk about the care that has been taken to ensure that we are targeting hard assets and Gadhafi's military.

Hon. John Baird: Madam Speaker, the member for Selkirk—Interlake is a leading member of the defence committee. I share his views that Canada is certainly punching above its weight in this effort.

Hon. Bob Rae: Not above Deepak's weight.

Hon. John Baird: Leave my friend alone, I say to the leader of the Liberal Party, Madam Speaker. The member for Calgary East is the best boss I have ever had.

Let me say this, that Canadians can be very proud of the leadership of General Bouchard, as the member for Selkirk—Interlake has said. He represents the very best of the men and women who wear the uniform in this country. As the motion states, we should acknowledge the great contribution of the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces. They are doing a phenomenal job and I know all members in this place support their great efforts.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, there have been some concerns expressed lately about the fact that the concentration of the mission is being directed toward regime change. I want to put to the minister a quote from Lieutenant General Bouchard from Monday's *Globe and Mail*, where he talks about Colonel Gadhafi and the indiscriminate attacks he has made on neighbourhoods, et cetera. Then he went on to say, "but my job is not regime change".

I want to emphasize that, because there have been comments made by some government people in Canada and some other countries. Would the minister confirm that in fact is the correct position and that regime change is not the role of the military mission in Libya?

Hon. John Baird: Madam Speaker, I do agree with the member for St. John's East and the comments by General Bouchard.

Obviously, we have the UN sanctioned mission. It is to protect civilians. It goes without saying that at the political level, apart from military issues, all G8 leaders and most actors in the world believe that Colonel Gadhafi must go. He is now wanted by the International Criminal Court and, of course, he has to face the full consequences of his actions. There is a significant and real concern that as long as he holds political power in Libya, a vulnerable population, those seeking the rule of law, those seeking human rights and freedom and democracy, will be at risk.

However, I can confirm to the member that General Bouchard certainly does speak for the government in that regard.

• (1040)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to the motion before the House with regard to the crisis in Libya and the potential extension of Canada's participation in the mission that we entered last March. I will make comments and then propose amendments in my remarks.

If we look at the timeline of this issue and its trajectory, we really have to go back not to Tripoli or Benghazi or Misrata but to the events that happened in Tunisia. We are all well aware of what

happened there, where the so-called Arab spring was launched. It is important to note the similarities between what happened in Tunisia and Egypt and Libya, but there are profound differences in each of these situations, and I will elaborate on them later.

What is notable in all of these situations and in what is happening in Yemen, Syria and Jordan, and the list goes on, is that the people of the respective countries have decided to hold their regimes to account. This is unprecedented in modern history in the region. It is something worthy of note, particularly for these countries in a post-colonial era, where the people themselves have decided they will set the agenda, that they will decide who is going to lead them and to throw off the shackles of oppression and suppression.

On February 15 in Benghazi, riots were triggered by the arrest of a human rights activist, and that is important for people to note. There was finally a coalescence of humanitarian action around those who typically have been isolated, arrested and tortured. People said they would no longer stand by and watch their fellow citizens jailed and oppressed. The riots soon turned into a fight against government forces, with protestors peacefully demanding that Colonel Gadhafi step down, similar to the situations in Tunisia and Egypt.

Just days later on February 21, two Libyan air force pilots decided to defect because they were ordered to use their monopoly on violence, as it were, in this case their jets, to massacre their fellow citizens. It was just after that on February 24 that anti-government forces coalesced around Misrata, evicting forces loyal to Gadhafi.

On February 27, we saw the first UN resolution, resolution 1970, which looked to impose sanctions on Gadhafi and his family. On March 1, the UN General Assembly suspended Libya's membership of the Human Rights Council, and aid agencies reported at that point that 147,000 people had fled Libya for Tunisia and Egypt.

It was on March 5 that the Libyan National Council met in Benghazi and declared itself the representative of the Libyan people.

On March 6, the former Jordanian foreign minister was appointed by the UN as a special envoy to Libya. The next day a regional flash appeal for the Libyan crisis was launched by aid agencies, and foreign workers started to flee Libya.

On March 9, over 100 physicians who were deployed in eastern Libya by the Arab Medical Union coalesced to support the humanitarian crisis there. I might note that many Canadian Libyan doctors and civil society coalesced in support of the humanitarian crisis.

• (1045)

It was on March 10 that forces loyal to Gadhafi bombed the oil town of Brega and took control of another town nearby, just west of Tripoli. It was then that we started to hear calls, after this massacre and bombing, by the Arab League. It was on March 12 that the Arab League called on the UN to impose a no-fly zone over Libya.

There was also support from the African Union, which expressed:

[Its] deep concern at the prevailing situation in Libya, which poses a serious threat to peace and security in that country and in the region as a whole, as well as to the safety and dignity of Libyans and of the migrant workers, notably the African ones, living in Libya. [The] Council is equally deeply concerned with the resulting humanitarian situation.

It was after the cry for help from both the Arab League and the African Union that on March 17 the UN Security Council voted on resolution 1973, which authorized a no-fly zone and all necessary measures to protect civilians from the government forces.

On March 20, Libya declared a ceasefire. The problem was that it continued to oppress its citizens and use violence against them, which clearly showed the cards of the regime, that it was not serious about a ceasefire at that point.

On March 24 NATO was given command to enforce the no-fly zone. It did not take full control of that until other countries signed on. I might note that Canada was joined in the mission by countries like Norway, Denmark, Spain, Belgium, the U.K., France, Italy, Turkey, Qatar, UAE, Jordan and Morocco.

These are important points because many people have forgotten how we got here. The fact of the matter is that we were asked by the African Union, the Arab League and the United Nations to act, and that is why we supported the initial motion of the House.

As has been noted by many, there have been many changes on the ground. For that reason, I think amendments are required to support the humanitarian concerns that exist, especially the internally displaced people and refugees resulting from this conflict; to ensure that we investigate and prosecute rape as a weapon of war, which is something my party has asked for in places like the Congo; and to ensure that there is a strengthened diplomatic pledge by the government to ensure that we fall in line with UN resolution 1973.

I say this because it is not a crisis that will be solved by Canada, by NATO or by more bombing, but by diplomatic and humanitarian pursuit and making sure that the UN is in the lead and is coordinating matters. For the New Democratic Party, it is absolutely important that the UN is involved. I say that because some would put their trust only in regional representation. We in the NDP believe that the UN is the right body to coordinate a crisis of the proportion we have seen in Libya.

I might also note that Libya has challenges. Libya is different from Tunisia and Egypt. It is in some ways about having to look at not just democratic development, as has been mentioned and is certainly true, but also at state formation. For 40 years we have seen one person dominate that particular state, tear down institutions and ensure that he has full power over the people of Libya. So there is a problem and challenge there that is different from the other two countries I have mentioned.

It is also clear to all that if we are to pursue the UN resolution in a way that is meaningful, we need to strengthen diplomatic support. I was glad to hear the minister announce that there would be recognition of the national council.

• (10:50)

I would also hope that we work with the diaspora community here. I also would hope that we would see a continued support for

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diplomatic efforts. Without that, we are not living within the spirit of UN Resolution 1973.

Finally, I want to touch on the need for full accountability and transparency.

I realize that after the initial motion was passed in this House we were in an election. However, it is absolutely imperative that the House and Parliament are seized with this issue through our committees of Parliament and that we actually live up to the same standards as other countries when it comes to transparency of our military mission as well as humanitarian and diplomatic efforts. For that, we believe an amendment is required that is in line with the spirit of the motion as presented.

I also believe we need to ensure that we have not only what was mentioned today by the minister, more humanitarian support, but that it needs to be explicit in the motion as well, and I think that amendments are required for that.

Finally, we have to say after three and a half months of a military commitment to the mission, that would be it. However, that is something that we will abide by, in terms of this motion, in terms of a three and a half month commitment. It is important that amendments be made to assure Canadians that this is not just about a military mission, that this is about making sure we live to the spirit of UN Resolution 1973. For that, I would like to amend the motion with the following. I move:

That the motion be amended by:

(a) substituting the word “consent” with the word “support” and the word “consents” with the word “supports;

(b) adding after the word, “therefore”, the following:

“, with the objective of protecting civilians.”

(c) adding after the words “with UNSC Resolution 1973”; the following:

“the House supports an increase in Canada’s humanitarian assistance to those affected by the crisis and efforts to strengthen Canada’s support for the diplomatic efforts outlined in UNSCR 1973 to reach a ceasefire leading to a Libyan-led political transition, and supports the government’s commitment to not deploy Canadian ground troops”

(d) adding after the words “war by the Libyan regime” the following:

“and supports Canada’s participation in the international effort in investigating, preventing and prosecuting these alleged crimes;” and

(e) adding after the words “under UNSC Resolution 1973” the following:

“, appreciates the government’s full and continued co-operation on committee meetings and the sharing of information in accordance with the highest levels of transparency practised by our partners in the operation”

I submit these amendments and I look forward to the House supporting them.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The amendments are in order; therefore, we will proceed with questions and comments.

Government Orders

● (1055)

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Madam Speaker, first let me congratulate my colleague for winning in the election and coming back as a foreign affairs critic. He and I have been sharing this portfolio for almost five years since Conservatives formed the government. We have a lot of respect for each other. I am glad to have him back as the NDP critic for foreign affairs.

I have a simple question. The member for St. John's East asked the minister about a regime change. On many of the issues that are being debated by panels, the member is always talking about regime change. The minister made it very clear that the military operation is not about a regime change. However, it needs to be made very clear.

I would like to know the NDP's position on this situation. As long as Mr. Gadhafi stays in power, how can we expect him to bring peace to that country? How can we expect him to not target his people as per the mandate that we have received from the UN?

It becomes critically important that while we do not have a military operation for a regime change, the need for Mr. Gadhafi to go as quickly as possible to bring peace to that country remains paramount.

I would like to know if the NDP agrees that Mr. Gadhafi needs to go, so that we can expect peace to return and to continue to work as was put in an amendment and as the minister said in his speech?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for the question and look forward to spirited debate in the next number of months and even years.

This is a critical point for Canadians. We cannot decide on whom we like and do not like and go around the world taking out people we do not like. We have to abide by UN resolutions by international law.

My response to the parliamentary secretary would be to quote Lieutenant General Charles Bouchard, who recently said the following in the press in reference to Gadhafi.

"This is someone is giving orders to go and kill his own people... He has lost his moral authority to lead his nation...but my job is not regime change."

It could not be more clear that the job of the House and of the Government of Canada is not to decide on the regime, but it is to make sure that we protect civilians. That is why, in our amendments, we have made sure that it is explicit. I would caution the government not to wander off into that kind of language. It does not help the mission, it does not help the people of Libya, and it does not help us do our work here.

Let us live within the spirit of the UN resolution. Let us live within the spirit of what we have agreed to as a responsible nation state.

● (1100)

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, I want to congratulate the Government of Canada on the Libyan

mission. It is about time that the national transitional council was recognized as the legitimate government. Better late than never.

But, I am a bit concerned by the fact that we are taking such a piecemeal approach to this. Every time I see a situation like the one in Libya, I think about General Roméo Dallaire and Rwanda. Canada is a citizen of the world and must be involved in helping civilians. I would like my NDP colleague to speak more about the overall situation in the Maghreb, which includes Egypt as well as Libya. How can we avoid taking a piecemeal approach to these countries, given that the entire Jasmine Revolution will be affected?

Second, Canada is unfortunately often lacking in terms of foreign policy. A military operation should not dictate how things are done. In a democracy, the military carries out foreign affairs decisions. Does the member think that Canada should be playing a more active role in diplomacy?

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar: Madam Speaker, of course we should be doing more and we have been critical of the government for not doing more. We think there should be an increase in the aid budget and that we should ensure we are investing in diplomacy abroad. We should actually be doing something the government promised in the throne speech, which was to have an institute for democratic development. This would be something that would aid the crises in Libya and other places.

A very important question is, "why Libya; why not—?" and then fill in the blank. It could be: "why not Syria?" or "why not Yemen?" We need to be seized of that important question, particularly in the case of Syria.

However, let us not be fooled by the fact that there are some people who would look to what is happening in Libya and say there should not be any intervention and support at all. Think about that. I think of the comments made by Maher Arar just yesterday. He said that we need to ensure that the UN intercedes with Syria. However, that is not to turn our back on Libya. We need to see strong, committed support in terms of diplomacy, in terms of a resolution and in terms of ensuring the United Nations is front and centre in that.

Could Canada do more? Absolutely. Should we pressure the government to do that, in particular with the situation in Syria? Quite obviously. That is something we will continue to debate in this House in the next number of weeks.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, there has been some discussion in the press particularly, and I go back to the time of the first resolution before this House on March 21. The suggestion was that there was no debate or discussion and that this was something people just did haphazardly. However, the member will know that in the weekend preceding that particular resolution for the House, there was much discussion between the parties that were involved regarding that resolution. One focus of the discussion was to have the resolution changed to say that not just military, but all aspects of UN Resolution 1973 are supported, endorsed and urged upon the government to pursue.

Government Orders

I wonder if he would comment on what has happened since then. My perception is that the focus has been almost entirely and solely on the military aspects of the resolution. Would he comment on that and why we are bringing forth the amendments we are making today?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Madam Speaker, it is important to remind people that when we initially passed the motion in the House in March, it was amended. That was to ensure that we did follow UN Resolution 1973, but also that we would not have ground troops and that we would ensure there was a timeline. The reason we are here today debating the motion is we wanted to make sure there was a timeline.

Those amendments matter because they ensured Canadians and us as parliamentarians, that it was not a blank cheque. I agree with my colleague from St. John's East that there needs to be more focus on the diplomatic side on the humanitarian support. That is why we put our amendments to this motion forward.

It is welcoming news that the Minister of Foreign Affairs stood today and recognized the fact that there needs to be more diplomatic and humanitarian support. We look forward to hearing more from the government on that.

• (1105)

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am a bit confused about the hon. member's statement. He started out in solidarity with the oppressed in Libya and went on to suggest that we should have faith in the UN and not regional representation but then he said that we could not decide who we like and who we do not like.

I wonder if the opposition's position is to recognize Libya's rebel council as the country's sole legitimate representative.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Madam Speaker, we absolutely believe that recognizing the council would be an important element toward making progress in Libya.

We need to be clear that regional groups must be within the ambit of the United Nations. When regional representatives of the Arab League and the African Union pushed for the UN to adopt a resolution, we fully supported that.

However, for clarification, we do not support unilateral actions by NATO to involve itself without the support of the UN.

We absolutely think it would be a progressive action to recognize the council so that there is someone to work with on the ground.

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time this morning with the member for Toronto Centre.

First, I thank the hon. member for appointing me as the CIDA critic in the Liberal shadow cabinet. I also thank the people of Sydney—Victoria for once again placing their trust in me to represent them here in Ottawa.

Helping people around the world in need has always been a passion of mine even before I entered politics. Since entering politics, the last 11 years I have had a lot of input on the foreign affairs committee and I have travelled to many countries to see the benefits of the help by Canadians.

As the Liberal critic for CIDA, I am honoured to stand in this House today to talk about our country's role in Libya post-Gadhafi.

I will begin by commending the brave men and women in the Canadian armed forces for the amazing job they are doing in Libya and around the world on behalf of all Canadians.

What will we see in Libya after the Gadhafi regime is gone? We will see reports of injustice toward Libyan women, men and children. We will hear more reports of mistreatment under a regime that must be dealt with. Funds will be needed for infrastructure but, most important, Libya will be without a democratic and judicial system, a basic right that we all cherish in this country.

When the G8 met at the summit last month in Deauville, the Prime Minister said that he did not intend to contribute any more funding to new democracies in Egypt, Tunisia or any other country that is now facing rebellions, such as we have seen in Libya and Syria, even though he strongly supports the democratic movements in these regions.

Democracy will not flourish without funds and proper guidance. The absence of social and government cohesion will be a tremendous obstacle in any possible transition to democracy. In fact, a post-Gadhafi Libya must first embark on a process of basic state formation, particularly the construction of a national identity and public administration, and, of course, the return of law and order before this democracy can take root.

The government seems to be in need of a bit of a history lesson. Some historians say that World War II may not have happened in Europe if the allies had assisted Germany in the reconstruction and instilling proper institutions. Instead, the victors after World War I were mostly interested in obtaining more land. The allies learned from this mistake and after World War II they set forth with a major reconstruction effort in western Europe. This was known as the Marshall Plan which was enacted in 1947 as a way to help rebuild Europe. This was also set up to discourage Communism from entering the region.

Canada also played another big role in the development of Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. We see that many of the east bloc countries have instilled our democratic institutions and our Charter of Rights in their constitutions.

Another example in Europe is the role we have played in the former Yugoslavia. We now see that justice is still moving forward in the court system.

At present, Europe is a thriving democratic region and, over the last century, Canada played a big role in making that happen.

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Another example is after the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq in 2003. Iraqis were faced with turmoil and civil war. This House and many Canadians may not know but, under the Paul Martin Liberal government, Canada pledged over \$300 million over seven years for reconstruction. The largest share of Canada's contribution of \$115 million was disbursed through the international reconstruction fund for Iraq and was managed by the World Bank and the United Nations.

Canada's support focused on the development of stable, self-governing and prosperous Iraq, with a representative and a democratic government respectful of human rights and promoting equality between women and men. The Canadian assistance in the areas of social and economic development also helped meet human needs, such as food, water and medical care.

Another more recent example of the work we are doing is in Afghanistan where we are helping it move forward as the conflicts diminish. Why are we not taking lessons learned in Afghanistan to other missions such as Libya?

• (1110)

Afghanistan is Canada's largest ever bilateral aid recipient. We are rebuilding schools, helping to build a governance structure and we are training the military and the police. We also have programs to support maternal and child health. We are doing it in Afghanistan and we must continue to do it in other countries.

Another personal experience I have witnessed with the reconstruction of another country post a notorious regime was in Panama. In 1980, Panama, under Noriega, was a police state with no democracy. The largest revenue was from the drug trade. After the fall of Noriega, the Panama Canal was handed over to the people by the U.S. and a new constitution was formed, but the economy also had to be restructured. I was asked to help with the reconstruction of its agriculture industry. I witnessed a transformation in Panama, which is now one of the most democratic and thriving countries in Central America.

Those are all examples that the House must realize have made countries vibrant and democratic.

Where is the government's post-Gadhafi strategy? The government has been notorious for its lack of detail. Why has it not put forward a more detailed plan regarding the future of a post-Gadhafi Libya or what if any role will Canada play in it? There is a known presence of extremist forces in certain areas of Libya, including some links to al-Qaeda. There is a very real fear that the extremists will gain a footing in a power vacuum that will undeniably occur once Gadhafi is finally ousted.

We know the situation we are facing in Libya. I have spoken of the great contributions Canada has made to help foster democracy. The reality is that the government has changed the way Canada operates on the world stage. By only offering to take military action and letting other multilateral international organizations do the restructuring is not acceptable.

The Prime Minister in a recent speech talked about playing a bigger leadership role on the international scene, but what we have seen is completely the opposite. It was with great interest yesterday when we heard in the House the member for Toronto—Danforth

criticize companies for working in Libya. The companies the hon. member criticized will be instrumental in rebuilding Libya.

We need to work with Libya to help with reconstruction. There will be a benefit for our companies as we get the oil industry back and get everything to work well in that area. We saw the situation in Egypt where there was insufficient international support after the regime change left Egypt in a vulnerable state.

We cannot let this happen in the Middle East. We especially cannot let it happen in Libya. I ask the House to vote for the subamendment by the member for Toronto Centre.

• (1115)

Mr. Deepak Ohrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my friend for winning his election and returning as the CIDA critic. I worked with him when he was the parliamentary secretary for international trade.

I am a little confused. In his speech he talked about post-Gadhafi. At the current time, he is talking about the UN resolution and saving civilian lives. However, that will not happen until Mr. Gadhafi is gone.

The member has already jumped ahead to a post-Gadhafi situation. He stated that we should learn lessons from Afghanistan and other situations. Of course we should. We helped it build its democracy but we are working with governments that have been elected by the people. They are working to build their government. The government there has legitimacy.

In Libya, however, at the current time its government is under investigation by the International Criminal Court. Therefore, how can he say that we have learned from Afghanistan and that we should move into Libya right away?

Hon. Mark Eyking: Madam Speaker, I am glad the member opposite is satisfied that I was re-elected, but I am sure a lot of other Conservatives are not. However, I am glad to be working with the member opposite again on the foreign affairs file, but we have to look at the future. What are we going to be doing in that country?

Right now we are concentrating on military action and that has to be dealt with. We have to get Gadhafi out of there, but we have to look at the future.

As was mentioned earlier in the House, are the funds there? Are we just going to rely on the multilateral groups to go forward with this, or are we going to put funds to help in the reconstruction? Companies in Canada will want to know if money will be available to make that happen as they go forward.

We need to look forward. I know the Conservatives go day by day, but we have to look month by month, and I hope the hon. member will recognize that.

Government Orders

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech and I, too, want to welcome him back to the House and congratulate him on his appointment as critic. However, I would like to clarify something for he and his party.

It was very clear that the question from my leader yesterday was about the fact that Canada was part of the equation in terms of supporting Mr. Gadhafi and that we had Canadian companies involved, in some cases, in building prisons. God knows what would happen to those prisons under the Gadhafi regime. The point is, from this day forward, should we not be seized with that to understand and learn that we do not want to do business with regimes that oppress their people like the Gadhafi regime?

This is not about the spoils of war. This is not about ensuring Canadian companies get in there and get a deal. It should be about human rights and democratic development.

I would love to know what the member thinks about that.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Madam Speaker, the reality is this. We can look at China and many other countries around the world where Canada plays a big role in reconstruction and infrastructure. Lavalin is doing work in Libya to help with clean drinking water, irrigation and issues that would bring prosperity up and help the people in the region. It is not there supporting a regime. It is not supplying weapons to the regime. It is there to help with infrastructure for a country that needs it.

I know the NDP looks at this one way, but we have to see the big picture. We have to look at how reconstruction happens. There must be reconstruction and institutions in place to help the country move forward.

Some may say that we should not be in China because a communist party is running the country. However, we have to be there and our country can do the job. Not only that, but when other countries do that reconstruction, they also introduce democracy to the people in the area working for them on these projects.

The NDP has to think outside the box and see the benefits of Canadian companies working in these countries.

• (1120)

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the chance to spend some time in this debate. I want to express my appreciation to the member from Sydney—Victoria for sharing his time. When we become a Gideon's army, we have to share more, and we are happy to do so.

The member from Ottawa Centre and the minister have outlined some of the history of the conflict. I simply want to say a couple of things in addition to the comments that have been made by my friend from Sydney—Victoria.

First, we should not make the mistake of believing that military intervention on its own represents a diplomatic and comprehensive solution to the challenges that we face in the world. It is very important for Canadians to have the understanding that while Canada deeply appreciates and respects the work that our military is doing in Afghanistan and in Libya, as it has done in many other

conflicts, the resolution of these conflicts requires more than simply a military effort. This is the first principle that we need to observe.

There are many times when it becomes a little easy to think that if we send planes over and drop some bombs, we are doing our bit for the mission. However, I was pleased to hear the minister today reflect on the fact that Canada's role needed to expand well beyond that.

Also, for my colleague from Ottawa Centre, we are fully supportive of the amendments he has proposed. I hope very much that those amendments will be satisfactory to the government.

[Translation]

We need to understand what is happening. We live in an unstable world where democracy does not exist for everyone and where human rights are not respected. In certain areas of the world, people live in terribly difficult economic conditions and an unstable political climate where repressive governments do not respect human rights. That is the world we live in.

As the hon. member for Sydney—Victoria said, we could rhyme off examples of significant progress that has been made. We have seen much positive change in Eastern Europe and Latin America over the past 50 years. There are still major challenges in Africa, the Middle East and China in particular. China is not currently a democracy, but it is a country of more than one billion people.

[English]

The question becomes, what is this standard? How do we deal with the fact that the world is not fully democratic, that the world is not one that fully respects human rights? Do we simply take the case of national sovereignty and say that we can never intervene in the affairs of another country, or do we understand, which I think we have to do, that the entire evolution of international law has taken us to this point where we have to say that what goes on inside a country is just as important as what happens between countries. The question is not so much any more what are the rights of the state, vis-a-vis other states. The question much more is whether the rights of citizens in countries, who are being mistreated by their government, are important.

This afternoon, and I am sure the minister will be there, we will be commemorating the Holocaust. We will be reflecting on the fact that the world turned away from those who were being viciously discriminated against in Germany. We waited for a long time and then the interventions came in Poland. Then the interventions came in Russia and then in all of eastern Europe, and six million people were killed because they were Jews.

After the second world war, we began to realize that we had to develop some sense of the rights of the world community and the rights that people had as a result of the injustices that were being faced.

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That is the way we have to understand what is happening in Libya. People ask me, "Why Libya? Why not Syria?" How do we explain this intervention and not that one? The answers are not always simple and, in fact, the answers are not always clear, but we are, slowly but surely as a world, taking the human footsteps toward the point where we can say that we will not allow people to be brutalized by their own government, that we will not simply sit back and do nothing and that we will intervene. Yes, that intervention may have a military component and people will be killed as a result of that intervention, and none of us should take joy in the fact that it is a consequence of what happened.

However, we also understand, from everything we have learned in human history, the consequences of appeasement, of not facing up to dictators, of letting people get away with impunity with killing their own people.

I would like to move an amendment to the amendment proposed by my colleague from Ottawa Centre. I move:

That the amendment be further amended by inserting after the words "political transition", the following:

That the Government of Canada engage with the Libyan National Council (LNC) based in Benghazi as a legitimate political entity and representative of the Libyan people; that it provide the LNC with advice and assistance in governance, including women's rights;

And further by inserting after the words "alleged crimes", the following:

That it ensure that Canadian citizens, landed immigrants, or visitors to Canada are not subject to any threats or intimidation by representatives of the Gadhafi regime.

I would add that I fully support the amendments proposed by the New Democratic Party. We had additional language, but we did not want to be redundant in simply putting forward the same perspective. I hope these proposals will have the support of the government. They are entirely consistent with the comments which the minister made today, and I hope they will be accepted.

• (1125)

The Deputy Speaker: The subamendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

• (1130)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the leader of the Liberal Party for his intervention and I would like to congratulate him on his return to the House, formally, and of course on his position.

There were a number of things he said in his speech that are important to note around the whole trajectory of what it means to ensure that the rights of civilians are protected. I want to underline the point that he made because there has been a lot of debate around why Libya and why not Syria.

I would ask my colleague, in terms of Syria, if he would please comment on how it is consistent to ensure that we have a diplomatic solution to support the people of Libya at a time when we are still having to deal with Syria. Some would say that there should not be a continuation of our support in Libya because there is a need for support in Syria.

I would simply ask him to comment on that and perhaps on what we could do in the case of the situation in Syria that has—

The Deputy Speaker: I must give the hon. member for Toronto Centre equal time to respond.

Hon. Bob Rae: Madam Speaker, I wish I had a magic answer.

I remember asking questions slightly higher up in the food chain over there about Sri Lanka as to why we were not intervening in Sri Lanka. I remember many government ministers saying, "What do you want us to do? Send in troops?"

The Secretary-General of the UN has now commissioned a panel to look into the possibility of war crimes in Sri Lanka.

In the case of Syria, it is a deep and genuine tragedy that is taking place. Thousands of people have been killed. Yet, the world community has not been able to rouse itself to deal effectively with the crisis. We have carried out some sanctions, we have carried out some efforts to restrict the activities of the al-Assad government, but we have not been able to find an effective solution.

There are many countries at the UN, two in particular on the Security Council, that do not want an intervention because they do not want the eyes of the world to be focusing on them, and they both have vetoes. They have taken a very, I regard, reactionary position with respect to the obligations of the community to intervene when there are such clear examples of abuse of a population.

I think we have to—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is more a comment. I want to thank the leader of the Liberal Party for his speech and intervention on this issue. I appreciate his wise counsel.

There is no doubt that military action will not solve the problem alone. However, the problem will also not be solved without military action. I want to say to him and to my friend from Ottawa Centre that I think Canadians should be very pleased that all members of this place have approached this issue with the best interests of Canadian values in mind. It has not been a partisan one; it has been collaborative. It is a good day for this Parliament. So, I just wanted to congratulate the leader of the Liberal Party for his speech.

Hon. Bob Rae: Madam Speaker, I am almost overcome by the good feeling, but I am aware that it will never last, and I am fully aware of what else might follow.

I hope the government will understand that respect is a two-way street. If there is greater transparency in operations and a willingness to discuss issues and to go through them on a systemic basis, then the better off we are all going to be. There is always a great deal of goodwill on this side. Our caucus looks forward to discussions on policies that are based on this approach. The more we can do it this way, the better off we are all going to be.

I want to express my appreciation to my friend the Minister of National Defence, who accommodated us by giving us some briefings and giving us further information. I deeply appreciate it.

The more we can get on like this, the better off we will be. Question period is coming at 2 o'clock, so we will see how long it lasts.

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• (1135)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think we have seen a high-water mark. Early days albeit in this Parliament, but the great traditions of this place include taking part in thoughtful and inclusive debate on subjects such as this.

I am pleased to participate as well in the debate regarding Canada's mission in Libya. The motion itself is clear. We are seeking an extension. There will be a vote.

Libyans themselves, most importantly, have been adamantly opposed to Gadhafi's autocratic regime and they took to the streets. Exasperated by the denial of their basic human rights, the endemic corruption in their country, and the concentration of Libya's wealth in the hands of few, in the hands of the repressive regime and its associates, they demanded that their voices be heard. Democracy has sprung in the Arab spring. Libyans have asked for a say in the affairs of their own nation, something we as Canadians believe is a basic right and a fundamental element of any good government.

The peaceful protests were met with brutal repression, devastating air and ground attacks, behaviour that is absolutely contradictory to Canadian and universal values of human rights and freedom of democracy. These fundamental pillars are truly fundamental to any functional society and they have been absent under Gadhafi.

It soon became evident in Libya that unless the international community assisted the people, further atrocities and massacres would follow. Let there be no doubt, we have already saved innumerable lives. The maniacal ravings of a lunatic made it very clear what the intentions were.

The international community did not stand idly by. I would suggest it moved with unprecedented speed and collaboration. The Arab League, for example, called for an intervention to protect the civilian population of Libya. The United Nations Security Council quickly recognized the deteriorating situation and it passed resolution 1970 on September 26 and resolution 1973 on March 17, calling for the protection of the Libyan population, including an arms embargo and the imposition of a no-fly zone over Libya.

Canada and our allies in NATO and partners in the Arab world, including Qatar, the UAE and Jordan, answered the call and proceeded to enforce resolution 1973.

We launched Operation Mobile on February 25 and pre-deployed to Malta. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the participation and support that was provided to us by the people of Malta.

[Translation]

The Canadian Forces are playing a key role in Canada's response to the crisis in Libya, and we can all be proud of the leadership that our country has been showing since this crisis began. We quickly contributed to the efforts of the international community to stabilize the troubling situation in Libya and to protect its people.

Members of our armed forces were first deployed to Libya to help evacuate Canadians. Two C-17 Globemaster aircraft, two C-130J Hercules aircraft and approximately 80 soldiers were deployed to Malta, making it possible for hundreds of Canadians and others to leave the country safely.

[English]

Madam Speaker, I should have indicated at the outset that will be splitting my time with the member for Newmarket—Aurora.

After the passing of resolution 1973, Canada again acted quickly and decisively in support of the UN Security Council's decision. On March 18, we announced a deployment of fighter aircraft to assist international efforts to enforce the United Nations resolution. Three days later, the government was extremely pleased to garner unanimous support here in the House for the parameters of Canada's military deployment.

When NATO took command of all operations on March 31, the Canadian Forces were already well engaged in the international mission. We leaned forward, and ask we speak, six CF-18 fighter aircraft and one spare, along with one CC-150 Polaris air refueler, two CC-130 Hercules tankers and two Aurora maritime patrol aircraft, as well as the HMCS *Charlottetown* with an embarked Sea King helicopter are all participating, along with and most importantly the support personnel in theatre. That is roughly 650 Canadian Forces men and women in uniform.

With a navy frigate and several air force assets in action, Canada has been at the very forefront, at the point of the spear in the NATO-led Operation Unified Protector, aptly named I might say.

Under the very capable command of a Canadian general, Lieutenant General Charles Bouchard, who is heading up the overall NATO mission, we can safely say in this place and throughout the country that we are all very proud of the leadership being demonstrated by Lieutenant General Bouchard and all of the men and women who are participating with our allies.

The Canadian Forces operations, whether air patrols or strikes, aerial surveillance or refuelling, maritime patrols or interdiction are critical and are having the desired effect. Along with the contributions of our allies and partners, they have significantly and steadily brought about progress.

The NATO-led international mission is fulfilling its mandate, consistent with the UN resolutions. It has saved the lives of civilians, as I mentioned earlier, and has considerably reduced the ability of Gadhafi's regime and its forces to plan and conduct attacks against the opposition and the civilian population.

It is weakening the infrastructure that supports the Gadhafi regime. We have seen high-level political and military defections in recent weeks, and the support for Gadhafi is weakening. The opposition is holding ground with increasing capacity to counter Gadhafi's attacks.

• (1140)

[Translation]

Unfortunately, some of the conditions that led the international community and Canada to intervene still exist. The situation has improved in certain areas of Libya; however, acts of violence are still being committed.

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Forces loyal to the Gadhafi regime continue to terrorize the people of Libya. Libyans are still suffering and are still in need of protection. Moreover, considerable restrictions are preventing aid workers from providing care and delivering urgently needed items.

Aid workers are often unable to reach the people who are most affected by the violence: the disadvantaged, the injured and those in need of immediate assistance.

[English]

As the Prime Minister stated a few weeks ago, Gadhafi and the Libyan government are clearly failing to fulfill their responsibilities to protect the Libyan population. Not only have they lost all legitimacy but they are also an obvious danger, and continue to be, to their own people. Two weeks ago, the UN Human Rights Council accused Gadhafi's regime of committing not just war crimes but crimes against humanity, when it carried out systemic attacks against the Libyan population over the past few weeks. He has been indicted.

Clearly, pressure must be maintained on the Gadhafi regime to ensure that civilians are protected against further attacks, and strikes on his command and control posts must and will continue.

To address a specific suggestion by some critics, withdrawing Canadian Forces from the NATO-led mission at this point would clearly send a wrong signal. More importantly, it would have dire consequences for the citizens of Libya, given the important role we are shouldering. It would be contrary to the core Canadian values of freedom, democracy and human rights, and it would not conform with our commitment as a country to the international community and would undermine the credibility of the alliance.

On June 1, NATO members announced that the alliance mission, Operation Unified Protector, would be extended for a period of 90 days, which is the subject of this debate. The decision sends a clear message to the Gadhafi regime that NATO partners and allies are determined to continue its operations to protect the Libyan people, to sustain its efforts to protect the United Nations, to fulfill the United Nations mandate and to keep up the pressure to see it through. Alliance members and partners alike expressed firm resolve to continue the mission and work together to bring about success.

Maintaining the Canadian Forces' contribution to these operations is the responsible thing to do. It supports the international community's effort to achieve a peaceful solution to the crisis and continues to demonstrate Canadian leadership and our commitment to NATO as a credible partner and ally. We need to continue our commitment to Libya until the terms of the UN Security Council resolution are met.

Just to remind all members of what those three existing goals are, they are: to ensure that all threats and attacks against civilians have ended; to make sure Gadhafi's regime and military and paramilitary forces have verifiably withdrawn to their bases; and that immediate full and safe unhindered access to humanitarian relief to civilians is guaranteed.

I conclude by remarks be referring to the inscription on the cabinet wall, which says, "Love justice, you that are the rulers of the earth". This is the wisdom of Solomon. I suggest that we take that advice. It

is the responsible, compassionate and right thing to do for our country and the people of Libya.

• (1145)

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Madam Speaker, Libya is a country of different tribes. It is deeply divided along tribal and geographic lines. There must be a major push for peace building after the bombing, the fighting and the civil war. Peace building is the tough work of developing the physical, social, political and security infrastructure for sustainable peace. It is the societal integration after a civil war and it is critically important.

Does the government have a peace-building plan now? If it does not, does it plan to build or develop one?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Madam Speaker, we are pleased that today the Minister of International Cooperation has announced further aid, something that I know that she and members of the official opposition fully support.

With respect to the broader question about a plan, clearly much of that responsibility falls to the entire international community, Canada included. Those discussions are being held at the highest levels of the United Nations. There was a communiqué sent from NATO, the secretary general with the unanimous support of all 28 NATO alliance countries, urging the United Nations very much in this same direction.

So while the situation will be a complicated, multi-faceted and one that will certainly remain a challenge in a post-Gadhafi world, Canada is very much in support of and ready to participate in what that plan will be. It will require resources and a great deal of effort, but most importantly it will require the leadership and support of the people of Libya in that direction.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the minister did an admirable job of canvassing the history of our involvement in this mission and bringing us up to date.

The real question of this debate, going forward, is what now? I am sure that the hon. minister would agree with me that bombing is not a strategy. It may well be a means to an end, but it is not a strategy.

NATO is not an entity that is well positioned to forge a political consensus to create democratic institutions. That may be part of it, but it is not its primary focus as an alliance. The question I have of the minister is whether it is appropriate to consider a pause in the bombing in order to facilitate some consensus or developments or discussions among the Libyan people.

Hon. Peter MacKay: The short answer, Madam Speaker, is that I do not believe it is, given the simple reason that we have seen at various times, intermittently in the last number of weeks, the ability and resolve of Gadhafi, the regime and those forces still under his command to cause serious damage in attacks throughout the country.

Given that, I would also take issue with the characterization of there not being a strategic effect behind the bombing. There has in fact been a very precise effort, first and foremost, to avoid civilian casualties and to ensure that we are hitting targets to incapacitate Gadhafi and his regime's ability to conduct those attacks on civilians.

They have within their armaments the ability to cause serious casualties. They have significant armaments at their disposal, and so has that very much been part of the strategy by Canada and NATO allies.

However, back to the earlier question by the official opposition, this all has to be done in concert with the United Nations. It has to be done very much with an information pipeline, if you will, to the best of our ability, with the Libyan people to ensure that we are making plans and that this is not done in any random or ad hoc way. I would suggest there have been talks at the highest levels to ensure that we do have a strategy going forward that will allow us to move quickly from military intervention to humanitarian and political progress.

• (1150)

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada is greatly concerned by the crisis in Libya and the plight of the hundreds of thousands of people trapped inside Libya or forced to flee to neighbouring Egypt, Tunisia and other border countries.

The situation on the ground in Libya is extremely volatile and its citizens, who are caught in the middle, are in urgent need of food, water, sanitation, protection and medical supplies. I note that although the food situation is stable for now, estimates are that food stocks will only last another four to five weeks with no way of procuring new supplies at present.

Some progress has been made. On May 30, a ship chartered by the International Organization for Migration evacuated stranded migrants and war wounded, and delivered food from the World Food Programme as well as medical supplies. Since mid-April the IOM has delivered 2,600 tonnes of humanitarian assistance and rescued 7,000 migrants and war wounded.

Canada was among the first to respond, and we continue to work with experienced partners to support the most pressing needs of the people affected by the violence.

However, the Libyan Red Crescent, which is providing a unique and incredibly valuable service on the ground, is stretched to capacity. Today the Hon. Bev Oda, Minister of International Cooperation, announced \$2 million in additional humanitarian assistance to help civilians in Libya.

This most recent announcement will assist the International Committee of the Red Cross, together with the Red Crescent societies of Libya, Tunisia and Egypt to continue efforts to deliver aid to conflict-affected people there. It will also assist the United Nations population fund to protect women and girls from sexual assault, including rape, and provide critical care to these survivors in Libya. The UNFPA aims to assist up to 50,000 women and girls in Libya who are victims of sexual violence.

Of the \$2 million in new funding, the Canadian International Development Agency is providing \$1.75 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross and \$250,000 to the UNFPA, building on Canada's earlier action, which I will outline in a moment.

Overall, Canada has now provided \$10.6 million in humanitarian assistance to assist people affected by the crisis. Canada is helping through the Red Cross movement, the International Organization for

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Migration, the World Food Programme and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, among others.

I remind members that on February 16, a popular uprising began against the four-decade long rule of Moammar Gadhafi. The reaction of the Gadhafi regime was swift and extremely brutal, including military operations against civilians. The conflict between forces for and against the government has since plunged the country into chaos.

The crisis has resulted in the exodus of a large number of people fleeing the violence to surrounding countries. As of the middle of May, over 790,000 people have fled Libya, more than a third of them migrant workers. The United Nations estimates that approximately 1.5 million people are affected. Many migrant workers are stranded at the borders, waiting to be repatriated to their countries of origin.

The international community has since been working to repatriate them back to their countries of origin: Egypt, Tunisia, Niger, Chad, Algeria and Sudan. At the same time, hundreds of thousands more people are still trapped inside Libya.

Canada calls on all parties to the conflict to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and to allow humanitarian workers full, safe and unhindered access to people in need. Canada is especially concerned about recent allegations that sexual violence, including rape, is being used against the civilian population, not just by Libyan government forces but possibly also by armed opposition forces.

• (1155)

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs has stated that the most urgent priority right now is for a humanitarian pause in hostilities in the Nafusa mountainous region where it will assess needs and secure the delivery of food and medical supplies.

UN OCHA will also help to evacuate the wounded and third country nationals still in the area. An appeal was issued by the United Nations on April 1. By mid-May, nearly 53% of the international response had been received.

Of CIDA's \$8 million earlier contribution, \$6,325,000 was in response to the United Nations regional flash appeal and \$1,675,000 was provided to the International Red Cross. Let me give a more detailed breakdown.

The International Organization for Migration has received \$3,575,000 to support repatriation efforts for migrants displaced by the fighting in Libya and repatriated 144,890 third country nationals. As well, \$1,350,000 has gone to the International Committee of the Red Cross to meet emergency medical needs inside Libya and to support Red Cross relief efforts in Tunisia and Egypt, which has reached 780,000 people, including internally displaced people and their host families.

The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has received \$250,000 to provide humanitarian relief, including food, non-food items, medical support to displaced migrants in Egypt and Tunisia. The revised appeal will help them to reach 200,000 people.

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A total of \$1.5 million in emergency food assistance has been provided to displaced and conflict-affected populations in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt.

An additional \$1.25 million has been provided to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for shelter, non-food items, water and sanitation for displaced people in neighbouring countries.

Also, the Red Cross Society has received \$75,000 to transport humanitarian relief supplies from stockpiles in Dubai to Tunisia.

In addition, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has contributed \$630,000 for essential security equipment to enhance the safety of UN humanitarian personnel in this dangerous situation.

The UN Human Rights Council has established an international commission of inquiry to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights law in Libya, including allegations of sexual assault and rape. In addition, on February 26, allegations of rape and sexual violence were referred to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court through UN Security Council Resolution 1970 and action is being taken. The ICC is an independent, permanent court with jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of the most serious international crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Under the leadership of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN has also established a protection cluster. As the situation evolves, this working group will investigate and address all forms of sexual violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse, trafficking, domestic violence and harmful traditional practices. The group is working closely with non-governmental organizations inside Libya, Tunisia and the border with Libya.

In addition, the International Committee of the Red Cross, working on both sides of the front lines, also provides protection and medical services to women who have suffered sexual violence.

My fellow members, Canada is doing everything it can to monitor the situation in Libya, provide humanitarian support where needed through its partners, and orchestrate a whole of government response to the situation to ensure the safety of the civilian population.

• (1200)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the resolution was in the House on March 21 and now there is an additional motion before the House that has been amended by the NDP for a further three and a half month extension of our involvement in Libya.

I have heard a lot of concerns from constituents and from Canadians generally about the military aspect of this campaign. One important aspect would be to consider what the overall strategy is in terms of an exit strategy. I heard the minister of defence say quite clearly earlier that bombing in Libya is a strategy.

I would like to ask the member whether or not the government does have an exit strategy in terms of what is happening in the region as a whole? Obviously there are other areas where conflict is going on. Canada is now involved in this situation in Libya, but it is important that there be a response in terms of the exit strategy. This was a key question in our involvement in Afghanistan and it remains

so today. I would like to ask the member to respond in terms of the overall strategy as it applies particularly to an exit strategy.

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, the exit strategy is going to be an ongoing discussion.

We are debating today the motion to extend our mission in Libya by three months. What we are discussing today from the perspective of international co-operation and international development is the urgent need for humanitarian support and humanitarian endeavours there.

We are focused right now on the urgent humanitarian needs. Once the situation is stabilized, we will continue to discuss what the exit strategy will be.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I note with some concern the member opposite's remark that in some places in the country the food supply is only four or five weeks as compared to the three and a half month extension of our military mission that we are discussing today, the difference between those two being a couple of months.

I would like to ask the hon. member opposite how much of the \$2 million in humanitarian aid will be applied to addressing the food situation? Does the hon. member expect that perhaps in the future we might have to increase this amount?

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer the member to the news release that was put out this morning by the minister wherein we talk about the new \$2 million that is going to go into this endeavour. It talks about providing emergency assistance for up to 780,000 affected people in Libya as well as those who have fled into neighbouring Tunisia and Egypt. This assistance will include food and non-food items, water, sanitation and primary health care.

We are also going to provide \$200,000 toward assisting women and girls who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing, sexual violence.

• (1205)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation relates to what I see as a level of inconsistency in her government's policies.

I, too am very troubled by the use of rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war.

The Conservative government is the same government that turned a deaf ear three times to requests from the United Nations for two peacekeepers from Canada to go to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I would ask for my colleague's response.

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member to the House.

The debate today is about Libya. We are focusing on what we are doing in Libya.

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Today the Minister of International Cooperation announced that we are putting forward another \$2 million. A tremendous amount of that is going to go into working with women who have been victims of sexual violence. That money is certainly going to help the women and the girls who are in Libya.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to rise in the House today to speak about this very important issue. UN resolution 1973 is a good example of what is referred to as the responsibility to protect doctrine. It is an approach or concept that is particularly dear to my heart since I was able to help promote it in a former life.

Since this resolution clearly reflects a consensus in the United Nations Security Council and clearly reflects this new citizen protection philosophy, it is important to strictly adhere to its terms. From military and other perspectives, I believe we all agree that, as the resolution states, the main goal is protecting civilians rather than trying to change the regime or meet any other objective.

I will not really get into the issue of the military because there are many other aspects that are equally important. I am thinking, for example, of those aspects that are more diplomatic in nature. It is important that Canada, all the other countries involved and NATO work with intermediaries who are currently on the ground and are trying to establish a dialogue, as well as with the United Nations Secretary-General's special envoy, Abdel-Elah Mohamed Al-Khatib.

We hope that all conflicts eventually end through diplomatic negotiations. We need to work towards that goal immediately and prepare for the future. It is also time to think about peace operations after the conflict and about ways to support the people of Libya to resolve the situation and find more peaceful solutions to the existing conflicts.

Another very important aspect of all this is the question of human rights. UN Security Council resolution 1970 has already referred the Libyan situation to the International Criminal Court and investigations are under way. In fact, a Canadian, Philippe Kirsch, is one of three jurists responsible for investigating human rights violations in Libya. Allegations of systematic rape, the use of rape as a weapon of war, are one of the specific aspects that must be examined. This situation is unacceptable and, if it turns out to be true, the guilty parties must be tried before the International Criminal Court. Similarly, anyone else responsible for serious crimes against humanity must be brought before the International Criminal Court.

• (1210)

Last but not least, the humanitarian situation in Libya is a real concern. It is estimated that between 10,000 and 15,000 people have been killed during the four months of conflict in that country. That is a huge number and it is completely unacceptable. Also, about half a million people have left the country since the crisis began and another 330,000 have been internally displaced. The UN also estimates that at least 1,000 people—mainly men—have been kidnapped or have disappeared from Misrata since the conflict began in February.

Right now thousands of people on both sides of the border are afraid they will not have enough food, medicine and other basic

necessities. However, the crisis extends beyond Libya's borders. Many people have been internationally displaced, particularly to Tunisia. Among those people are many migrant workers who cannot return to their homes.

According to the United Nations, in the worst-case scenario, as many as 3.6 million people in Libya could be affected by a humanitarian crisis. Problems exist not only in Libya and in neighbouring countries, but here as well. Libyans here are running into problems. Libyan students in particular are no longer receiving funding and their visas might expire as they no longer have the means to support themselves. We have to think about those people as well.

A lot more needs to be done on a humanitarian level. So far what we have given in humanitarian aid is a little more than a third of what we have spent on the military effort.

[English]

I welcome the announcement from my hon. colleague that \$2 million more has been credited to this effort today.

[Translation]

However, we must continue in that vein. We are quite certain that as things progress on the ground, there will be growing needs. Of course money is needed, but so is a plan. Let us not forget to use the resources we have on the ground. We have seen the International Organization on Migration use boats to evacuate people and to deliver food and drugs. We also have resources on the ground that could be used in that way, when possible.

Finally, I would like to say that recognizing the national transitional council of Libya is certainly a step in the right direction that will allow us to have a dialogue to further our humanitarian efforts and determine what to do next.

• (1215)

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her very helpful and constructive contribution to this debate. I have a question for her.

Given the extent of the humanitarian crisis, the number of victims, especially civilian victims, in the country, and the number of people displaced by the crisis, what measures does she think could be taken by the agencies and various United Nations bodies in Libya and in the region? In her very professional opinion, what multilateral measures will need to be taken to better address the various aspects of this humanitarian crisis in the months and years to come?

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, I thank my honourable colleague for his question.

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I believe that it is an extremely important question. All humanitarian aid must be coordinated. Let us be frank, we have seen the waste that can occur when aid is not closely coordinated. It is not a question of each country doing its own thing, doing what it believes is right. We must have good assessments on the ground, and the group must be coordinated, primarily through certain UN agencies and the various stages of coordination that already exist. We know that all our international co-operation organizations have coordination offices. Within the United Nations, I am thinking mainly of the International Organization on Migration, which is already active on the ground, is very familiar with the issues and the needs, and to date has been a leader within the World Food Programme and other similar organizations. However, we must bring everyone to the table for a discussion.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I commend the member on her remarkable speech, in which she mentioned that she had some experience. She has been very modest about her considerable decades of experience as a worker in the diplomatic and foreign services of our country. We are very grateful she has brought that experience, knowledge and judgment to the House of Commons and to our caucus. She has been very modest about it, but we certainly appreciate her knowledge, experience and ability to advise us on these extremely complex matters.

Would she comment on the huge number of refugees who have streamed across the border to Tunisia? Many of them are not Libyans or Tunisians. They are there because they are displaced workers who did not have a chance to get out. Has she received any indication at all that the government is attempting to take this issue seriously and trying to do something, or is it necessary for us to continue the pressure?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his kind words.

It is an extremely worrisome situation. Most of them are migrant workers. They are often ignored and forgotten, and now happen to be at the border. These workers generally come from countries that do not have the resources to repatriate them. They find themselves in an unstable situation, as though they were practically stateless. We know that much has been done for them, in Tunisia in particular. We must applaud the efforts of the Tunisian government to accept and shelter these people.

• (1220)

[English]

There is beginning to be a strain even on the Tunisian government. That is why it is more of a global issue. We should also be talking with the Tunisian government to see what kind of help and support it needs to help the people. It has been doing its share and we should be doing our share, too.

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to tell the member for Laurier-Sainte-Marie that I very much appreciated her speech. Her presence in the House will certainly be a great help to our country. I have three specific questions for her.

First, the NDP says that our job is not regime change—we agree that it is not the job of the military on the ground—but as soon as we support the transitional council as the legitimate government, we are calling for a regime change. That is certainly not the point of view of the current regime. So we must recognize that.

Second, Canada is already present on the ground, for example, with SNC-Lavalin. Is this not an excellent advantage for us as we help the Libyans rebuild their country?

Third, there is the fact that we cannot intervene everywhere, in Syria, for instance. For the time being, we are not looking at sending our military into Syria. Is that an excuse to not intervene anywhere? If we want to be perfectly consistent, we would either intervene everywhere or nowhere at all. But the results would be very detrimental to Canada's role in the world. I would think that we should intervene wherever we can do so successfully.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his comments and encouragement. I will give a very brief response.

The Libyan national transitional council truly should be recognized as a legitimate entity with which we can enter into discussions and establish a dialogue. I am talking about a legitimate entity with which we can establish a dialogue, and that dialogue is absolutely essential. If we want to provide humanitarian aid and work on the ground, we must be able to have discussions with this organization.

As for the reconstruction, I believe that at this stage, in June 2011, we probably have to wait in order to be able to identify reconstruction needs and determine which organizations would be best suited to directing and supporting the Libyans in the reconstruction. After all, it will be up to the Libyans themselves.

I think there is a key element to the final question, concerning the impossibility of being involved everywhere. The key element in the responsibility to protect doctrine is the UN Security Council. Once the UN Security Council approves taking action, I believe that Canada, ideally, should be part of that action. It is our authorization to take action. Without the Security Council's approval, it is much more difficult and cannot be considered part of the responsibility to protect.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on being elected Speaker. I also wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary East, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is doing a remarkable job.

I am very honoured to participate in this important debate today. I am able to do so because I was re-elected by the people of Lévis, Bellechasse and Les Etchemins on May 2. I would first like to thank them for their continued support.

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I would also like to thank all the volunteers who worked on the election campaign and my office staff, my team, who, for more than five years, have worked on behalf of the people of Lévis—Bellechasse and Les Etchemins. I would like to say that we are here for all the people in my riding, to meet their needs and give them the straight goods, to the best of our knowledge.

Naturally, I would like to thank the members of my family: my parents, Monique and Irvin, an accordion player whom many people know; my children, who are becoming increasingly involved in this adventure, sometimes in spite of themselves; and my wife Marie, who is always by my side. If we are in this place, it is because we have people who make it possible for us to perform this wonderful duty, and I am very grateful to them. I would also like to thank my in-laws, Louise and Jacques, who will be celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary.

We live today in such a great country because we stand up for the values of freedom as well as for the women and children who live here and elsewhere. I want to take part in this debate today in order to maintain peace here and abroad.

As has been said in many speeches today, the humanitarian situation in Libya remains very precarious and, unfortunately, continues to deteriorate. There is a serious crisis in terms of the protection of civilians, and our main concern remains the fate of people trapped in areas where there is fighting, including Tripoli, Misrata and the mountainous region in the western part of the country.

Damages to infrastructure and shortages of money and gas will likely have significant repercussions on the population over the weeks and months to come, particularly on the most vulnerable. That is why Canada remains committed to the mission in Libya and is determined to ensure that Libyans' most basic humanitarian needs are met.

The UN assessment mission in Misrata found that infrastructure in the downtown core had been generally destroyed. What is even more worrisome are the deficiencies when it comes to protection, particularly the protection of women and children, that the mission also found. We are extremely worried about the allegations of sexual violence used by military forces as a weapon against civilians. We have called for a thorough investigation into the situation so that the aggressors can be brought to justice for these deplorable acts.

Furthermore, the use of anti-personnel mines by Gadhafi's forces and the negative impact they are having on the ability of humanitarian organizations to carry out their activities is completely unacceptable. We are especially concerned about the situation in the mountainous region in western Libya. We have emphatically told the Libyan government of the importance of providing civilians with basic necessities and we have urged that country's government to ensure that humanitarian organizations have unrestricted and safe access.

To date, Canada has responded to international appeals for humanitarian aid by giving some \$8.6 million to its partners in the region. The full amount of this contribution was allocated and spent and it provided the people of Libya with much needed water, essential items, food, shelter and emergency medical care.

In conjunction with the Canadian International Development Agency, we are working with several partners, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Department of Security and Safety. Canada has also taken a leading role in ensuring that the humanitarian situation in Libya steadily improves; however, there is still much work to be done.

On June 9, it was estimated that over 660,000 people had left Libya and not returned and that 135,000 people had been internally displaced.

• (1225)

Canada continues to raise serious concerns about the measures taken by the Gadhafi regime, which have led Libyans and migrants to leave the country to go to Egypt, Tunisia and other neighbouring countries. As well, we have publicly exhorted the Gadhafi regime and the anti-Gadhafi forces to protect civilians.

The Gadhafi regime chose to wage a war on its own people. In so doing, it violated international law. In light of this blatant disregard for human rights and international law, Canada was among the first to demand that the regime immediately cease the attacks on its own people and guarantee that the perpetrators of these deplorable crimes would be brought to justice.

Our country, Canada, was one of the first to ask the UN Security Council to bring the situation before the International Criminal Court, and we have strongly supported the creation of an international commission of inquiry into the human rights violations. The preliminary results of this inquiry have confirmed the severity of the crimes committed. The prosecutor at the International Criminal Court has asked that warrants be issued for the arrest of Moammar Gadhafi, his son, Saif al-Islam Gadhafi, and his brother-in-law, Abdullah Senussi.

The prosecutor alleged that these three people planned and ordered crimes against humanity and organized widespread, systematic attacks against civilian populations, including murder, torture and persecution. The international community cannot and will not tolerate this situation. The international commission of inquiry conducted an investigation and found that crimes against humanity and war crimes had been committed by Libyan government forces. What is more, the commission says there are indications that these crimes are part of a strategy devised by Colonel Gadhafi and his inner circle.

Canada is extremely alarmed by the allegations, which are currently under investigation by these two bodies, that the Libyan regime systematically uses rape and sexual violence as an instrument to repress its population. When used as a weapon of war, rape is a war crime and a contemptible act. When used to systematically attack, repress and terrorize people, rape can also be a crime against humanity. These are heinous acts of sexual violence perpetrated to advance the military objectives of a regime. We unreservedly condemn these acts and express our most sincere sympathy to the victims.

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These reprehensible acts are the reason for Canada's involvement in the NATO mission. War crimes and crimes against humanity are serious crimes that threaten world peace, security and well-being. The scope, extent and brutality of these acts make them international crimes, an international concern that calls for an international response. The international community must demonstrate a collective determination and continue to guarantee accountability and protection for the people of Libya.

Canada supports the investigations by the commission of inquiry and the International Criminal Court. The perpetrators of these crimes have to face justice, and these crimes must never be committed again. Let the people in Libya who continue to order these heinous crimes be warned that the world is watching and they will not escape justice.

Canada will ensure that those who seek to remain in power in Libya by committing these crimes against their people are arrested and held accountable for their actions. Canada's role in Libya must continue for the reasons I just mentioned. Colonel Gadhafi must leave. The Libyan people must be liberated and protected.

• (1230)

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member touched on a number of things that are worthy of underlining. He mentioned the fact that we need to take seriously the issue of rape as a weapon of war. He will know that our party has pushed the government to recognize that and we welcome the announcement that it will be supporting action on that. It is important to note.

The member also mentioned that this was something that we needed to be seized with. This is not about some far-off place by someone with whom we had no contact.

We know there were revenues realized to the Gadhafi regime because of our trade and recognition of it. In light of the fact that Canada was doing significant trade with the Gadhafi regime, would he not also believe that is yet another reason that we need to be involved in protecting citizens there simply because of our involvement in trade and our recognition of the Gadhafi regime for many years?

• (1235)

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

He raised an interesting point. As soon as our government, our country, is informed that rights are being violated, rights as fundamental as an attack on the integrity of the men and women of this country or other countries, it is important to take action. That is what we have done. As I mentioned, as soon as we were informed of the allegations, the government took action and immediately denounced rape and sexual violence as weapons of repression against the people of Libya. That is why we are calling on the organizations we have created, such as the International Criminal Court, to take action and ensure that this no longer happens in Libya or anywhere in the world.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in his comments, the member indicated, without any hesitation, that Colonel Gadhafi must leave. Do the current mission objectives include the removal of Colonel Gadhafi from power? Is the government crystal clear on that particular point?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat to the member that it is important for our government to ensure that the primary role of a government is to protect its citizens. In the case before us today, it is clear that the complete opposite is happening. That is why Canada will ensure that those who try to remain in power in Libya by committing crimes against its citizens will be arrested and held accountable for their crimes. Canada must continue to be involved, and Colonel Gadhafi must leave so that the people of Libya are safe.

[English]

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that we are extending this mission of having the no-fly zone and of taking the assets that Colonel Gadhafi and his regime have because they have been using those assets against their own people.

The war crimes to which the minister has alluded are horrendous. The killing of thousands of people by Gadhafi and his supporters must be stopped. I know we are not here talking about a regime change but there are war crimes being committed. Now they are using rape as a weapon against their own people.

I would like the minister to elaborate more on why it is so important that we extend this mission. It is a NATO-led mission with a Canadian general in charge and it is sanctioned by the UN, the Arab League of Nations and, of course, the African Union.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, there are many reasons for Canada to stay on this mission. Crimes, such as rape, are being committed and we cannot tolerate that. We know government leaders are involved in that and we cannot tolerate that. Therefore, as a country, we must intervene. We want to keep peace and the way to do it is to preserve it elsewhere and to assume that the basic and fundamental rights of citizens are protected here and elsewhere.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, let me congratulate you on being elected as Chair.

Today, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and all my colleagues will continue speaking about the importance of the continuation of this military mission. I would like to make it very clear for the Liberal member, who asked whether we were committed to a regime change, that the military mission is not part of a regime change. The political dimensions require that Mr. Gadhafi go, but that does not mean we are looking for a military regime change. That is not the military objective.

Hopefully that answers the member's question. That is what the Minister of Foreign Affairs said this morning.

I have visited Libya. I went there a couple of years ago to attend the African Union Summit, hosted by Libya. Colonel Gadhafi hosted the conference. I saw him and I met his foreign minister.

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In no uncertain terms, the general consensus of Mr. Gadhaifi was he was a man with a very high ego, with very eccentric ideas, living in his own dream world that he created and wanted others to follow him. In fact, at the African Union Summit, he antagonized everyone by having his own ideas of the direction he wanted to go even when others did not want to go that way. He has been in charge of the country for 40 years.

My colleague talked about the business dealings that Canada had with this individual. The world tolerated Gadhaifi for 40 years. We are not in the business of regime change. Therefore, while Mr. Gadhaifi was there, with his eccentric ideas, the world tolerated him.

He used his people's wealth for his own ideas, coming out with some weird ideas that could only be attributed to a very high ego. In fact, the man, who deposed a king by taking over power, called himself the king of kings, by the votes of tribal kings giving him this title. That is the type of individual who is in power.

When he was challenged, following the Arab revolution, some comments were made that Tunisia and Egypt were not similar to what happened in Libya. What has happened in Libya is the continuation of the Arab spring revolution that is now touching Yemen as well as Syria. It is the desire of the people to get rid of their eccentric leaders who have been in power for 40 years and who have done practically nothing with their wealth for their people. Therefore, the people are demanding legitimate change.

This fellow has come forward with a very brutal repression against his people. Everybody is talking about it. My friend talked about that. We have been told that he is even hiding his military assets from the civilian population and he is actually killing his own people. The ICC, of which we are very positive, will very shortly indict him for crimes against humanity, which he richly deserves.

It is of critical importance to note that the UN Security Council has finally said that enough is enough, that he cannot carry on like this. Today the Liberal leader talked about the Holocaust and the six billion people who lost their lives because not enough action was taken.

I am very happy to say that the Security Council, with the African Union leaders, all agree that they need to stop him from killing his people. That is the key element of the resolution. That is the key element of why Canada is over there. As the Prime Minister has said, we will make our mark felt on the world stage in the promotion of democracy and of rule of law, which is the cornerstone value of foreign policy of this government. That is extended to Libya.

• (1240)

We are there because we need to protect civilians and the only way we can protect them is to ensure that Gadhaifi does not have the power and prevent his forces from continuing to kill his people. As we heard, he is now not only using his military assets, but using rape and everything else to suppress his people.

We must understand that this UN mission has two components to it. Today the Minister of Foreign Affairs made it very clear that there is a diplomatic initiative arising out of this, which is why today we have recognized the transitional authority in Libya to continue the dialogue process so we can continue to build that country. The institutions that Mr. Gadhaifi built for 40 years were only to allow

him to stay in power and not for the benefit of his people. Therefore, it is important for us to help.

Today's support, through the NDP amendment, is that we agree to humanitarian assistance because his brutal regime has created a humanitarian crisis and we need to assist the people. We are working with our international partners to ensure we deal with that humanitarian crisis. However, the extension of the military mission is to ensure that peace and stability return to Libya and that the Libyan people are not harmed by that lunatic dictator who refuses to give up power.

We are putting political pressure on Mr. Gadhaifi. When we talk about Mr. Gadhaifi leaving, it would be in the interests of he and his son to do so because the writing is on the wall, as has been said many times. Once the ICC indicts both of them, they will have no place else to go. It is best for them right now, in the interests of their people, to go. This is the diplomatic pressure that Canada and the international community are applying and will continue to apply.

When we say Mr. Gadhaifi has to go, we are not talking about a regime change. We are saying that the man has lost all moral authority to govern his country. He has been killing his own people and he is a man who is very soon going to be indicted by the ICC for crimes against humanity, which is a huge indictment against him by the international community.

Therefore, I am happy to say, as I listen to my colleagues on both sides, that we are going to pass this extension unanimously. We are sending a message internationally by saying we are part of NATO, will remain part of NATO and we want to get rid of the president. Canada is telling people that it is there to help protect the people who seek legitimate democratic rights and the rule of law.

I am glad this message will go to the international community that Canada will stand firmly and solidly in promotion of its core and democratic values, democracy and the rule of law. We will not accept people like Mr. Gadhaifi or anybody else around world who pick up arms and kill their people. Mr. Gadhaifi is not the only one. It happened before him, but I hope it will not happen in the future.

However, if it does, this mission will be an example that the international community will respond. Not only will the international community respond but countries like Canada will also respond. The debate held over this year will send a unanimous message to the international community, the world and to dictators that we will not remain silent.

• (1245)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know the parliamentary secretary is concerned about this issue. In the lead-up to the decision by the Security Council, the position of the government was that it would keep all options open and would wait for the Security Council resolution, despite calls by some parties and some elements in Canada to take action on the responsibility to protect.

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Do I gather that he and his party support the NDP position that to engage in a multinational intervention of this nature by using the responsibility to protect the United Nations needs to be part of this and that we should operate through the international body, which we note is improving in its ability to get involved in multilateral work to protect people? Is that the position he is putting forth here today?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, when the debate was going on, we were saying that all options were open. We were also campaigning behind the scenes at the United Nations Security Council to get this thing going, but publicly, until a decision was made by that body, it was not possible for us to say anything.

However, I can assure the hon. member, under every circumstance, that Canada was very active at the United Nations. We were there to ensure that a strong was message sent to say we were striving for those values about which we have talked. I can assure him right now that this government will continue working with multilateral organization, including the UN, at all relevant times to ensure this is done.

• (1250)

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the ends of revolutions can be very messy affairs. I thank the parliamentary secretary for his remarks about Canadian values, promoting democracy and the rule of law.

If Mr. Gadhafi were to leave his country tomorrow, we still would not have democracy and the rule of law in Libya.

Would the parliamentary secretary be able to promise that Canada would remain involved in Libya to the point where we would have democracy and the rule of law in Libya?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to tell my hon. colleague, yes. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister were at the G8 meeting in France. The political issue on the table was how we would help all these countries. The Prime Minister made it very clear that Canada would stay to help the Arab spring revolution find its feet.

I agree with him, there is no point in creating a vacuum. If we create a vacuum, then we create anarchy, and that is not the intention of anybody, including the G8.

We will be working with our partners in the G8 to ensure that we build the institutions that will provide freedom and the rule of law in that country.

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the crisis in Libya is very concerning, not only to members of this House, but also to all Canadians.

Could the member outline for the House some of the consequences for Libyans, women, children, all the innocent civilians and the world, if countries like Canada pull back or weaken our diplomatic, military and especially our humanitarian efforts currently under way?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, the member hit the nail right on the head with her very excellent question.

If we move out, then the whole thing will collapse into anarchy. It is not what we want. We want to ensure that the international

community stands with the people who are legitimately asking for democratic rights. That is a core value for Canada and Canada will remain strongly committed, as the Prime Minister has said on the world stage.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this debate today. We are trying to achieve something here that Canadians can support and there is indeed a legitimate debate taking place just as there was on March 21.

Although we share the goal of protecting civilians in Libya, there is a certain set of issues that our party, in particular, has found important to insert into the debate and into Canada's actions in Libya. We found it necessary to do that back in March when the motion that was being discussed between the parties and being presented by the government, after the United Nations Security Council resolution 1973, was simply dealing with the military aspect of what Canadian efforts would be.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs talked about what goes on behind the scenes. Well, behind the scenes over the weekend leading to that resolution there was considerable input by my colleague, the critic for foreign affairs, the member for Ottawa Centre, and myself on the shape of that resolution. It was very important for us to see in that resolution Parliament supporting and promoting all aspects of UN resolution 1973, which is again what we are doing here today.

In his speech, the Minister of Foreign Affairs accepted our interest to have on the record the changes pertaining to the humanitarian side and the stepping up of diplomatic efforts in achieving a lasting resolution in Libya.

The situation, of course, is changing, but the situation is changing because we had an expectation I suppose that this would not last very long. However, we have seen it last a lot longer than we expected.

We have heard that the diplomatic efforts needed to be stepped up and of the need for, as the resolution itself points out, a ceasefire as a primary goal of the intervention in order to protect civilians. We have also heard over the past number of weeks a considerable amount of talk by, in some cases, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and, particularly, the Minister of National Defence on something that is seen to be more than that. The mission and goal of protecting civilians had changed to something different. We were into some sort of regime change as an objective of the NATO mission.

We have an objection to that. This intervention is based on the responsibility to protect, and the necessity of intervening in another country militarily is part of that end, but it is also to avoid a situation where interventions take place to affect a change in the regime in some other country.

It is not for this country to do that. This is why we have insisted in our amendments that there be recognition that the results of what we are proposing here would end up with having a Libyan-led political transition that must take place in Libya, and that is the goal here.

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I have heard the Minister of National Defence come out with statements that I would refer to as a “muscular militarism”, a bellicose state that Canada is somehow going to play a different role in the world from here on in. We are using our military as an aim in foreign policy and building ourselves up in the world through that means.

We do not support that approach. We do not support that kind of foreign policy for Canada. It is not in keeping with Canada's tradition and we speak out against it.

As we speak out against that, we also recognize that it is not what the Canadian leader who is on the ground directing this mission on behalf of NATO says. I will quote from yesterday's *Globe and Mail* in an extensive article by Paul Koring, who is very knowledgeable in military affairs. He interviewed Lieutenant General Charles Bouchard and said:

But he carefully sticks to the UN mandate that the conflict isn't to achieve regime change, just to protect civilians.

He talks about Colonel Gadhafi, as many would, and we all understand that.

● (1255)

He quotes Lieutenant General Bouchard as saying:

This is someone is giving orders to go and kill his own people...He has lost his moral authority to lead his nation—

This is the general who is co-ordinating all of the NATO actions, including the efforts by the French and the British who on their own wanted to use armed helicopters as part of this, to which he insisted would have to be brought in under NATO command as well.

When talking about Gadhafi the general said:

He has lost his moral authority to lead his nation...but my job is not regime change.

I thank General Bouchard for stating that so emphatically and clearly, so that we will not be confused, regardless of the kind of statements that we hear from the Minister of National Defence.

As defence critic for the New Democratic Party and the official opposition, I do have to raise one important point coming out of the Minister of National Defence's speech. I have to acknowledge that he was very moderate in his tone today. I thank him for that. I hope he continues that and that it is evidence of a new approach by the government on this issue.

I see the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence. I congratulate him on his new position and on being elected, and joining us here in this House. I know he himself has broad experience in providing diplomatic service to our nation and I thank him for that. However, I have a problem and perhaps he can address it. I did not get a chance to ask the minister himself.

It has to do with perhaps a bit of redefinition by NATO of the objectives because the minister sort of said this came from resolution 1973, but it actually comes from the NATO mission objectives. One, of course, is to end the attacks on civilians. That is consistent in both of those.

The one that causes me some difficulty from a strategic point of view is the verifiable withdrawal of the regime's military and

paramilitary forces to bases and unhindered access for humanitarian aid.

I accept the latter, but not the verifiable withdrawal of the regime's military and paramilitary forces to bases as a requirement and objective of the UN mission.

We know a ceasefire is the objective. There have been various attempts to see that happen by asking Mr. Gadhafi to take steps that he has not taken. However, if the objective is to get everybody back to their barracks and back to their bases, how can that be accomplished if one of the targets of the NATO mission has consistently been the barracks of soldiers operated by Gadhafi? If barracks are being targeted and at the same time the objective is to get everybody to come back to the barracks, how does that make military sense? Is there not a significant conflict?

I hope that the hon. parliamentary secretary will have an opportunity in questions and comments to address that because I think it is an important point if we are to achieve the possibility of a speedy resolution to this particular conflict.

For example, I note that Turkey has been active on the diplomatic score. We saw a report on Sunday regarding members of the Turkish diplomatic corps meeting with Mr. Gadhafi and, in fact, offering him guarantees of protection in an attempt to get a ceasefire operating there. Unfortunately, there has been no success to date. Nonetheless, there seems to be some significant effort in that regard, an enhanced diplomatic effort by our partners.

I believe we still have a good relationship with Turkey despite some resolutions by this government and we should because Turkey is key in this regard. I believe the parliamentary secretary could tell us from his own experience in Afghanistan and elsewhere that Turkey is a key state in dealing with people and other nations, and other countries in that part of the world. I will leave that to my foreign affairs colleague to talk more about that.

However, I believe Turkey provides a terrific potential for a bilateral relationship with Canada both economically and obviously on the diplomatic side. Here is an example where Turkey may have some credibility in that region and can help in this matter. We should perhaps work closely with it.

I do still have a problem with this stated objective here and how that intersects with the ability to achieve a ceasefire, which frankly is the first objective. If we look at the United Nations Security Council resolution 1973, number one is to obtain a ceasefire and protect civilians. That is the way to do it.

● (1300)

We realize we are dealing with an unusual individual in the case of Colonel Gadhafi. I will not use some of the epithets that were used earlier. We do know, of course, that he stands accused of significant humanitarian crimes and war crimes, and we all hope these are dealt with in the appropriate forum. In the meantime, there is significant effort to be undertaken.

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I will add to some of the concerns we had here. We recognize, of course, that there is a lot of work still to be done. We have had an intervention in the form of a request to members of Parliament. I am sure other members of Parliament have received these. I know my colleague, the member for Ottawa Centre, and I received correspondence from the Canadian Libyan Council seeking our support for the continuation of the support for UN resolution 1973 and Canada's action. It specifically referred to the continued shelling and bombing. The letter of June 5 said:

[...] it is our wish that NATO step-up its efforts in the Western Nafusa Mountain region where civilians have been suffering from shelling at the hands of Gadhafi troops for months.

Then the letter makes reference to the humanitarian aid report for further information. This is the Canadian Libyan Council that speaks on behalf of Libyan Canadians across the country. It has expressed very strong support for the intervention by Canada as part of this mission.

This is an important function that still continues. We do not want to see a circumstance where we get involved in a quagmire with no end. We want to see swift action to resolve this issue, and I think it may be that the objectives spelled out here in the NATO objectives could be a hindrance to that if that is stated as an objective without the means to get there, particularly if there is continued bombing of barracks and no other means of going about that solution.

With these kinds of concerns here, the bellicose talk and the muscular militarism we are hearing from the Minister of National Defence in particular and others, we are also hearing from other countries. We have heard it from the U.K., France and other countries at the G8.

We all share a similar view of the fact that Colonel Gadhafi is not the kind of person we have any respect for. We would think that any post-conflict regime or situation in Libya, as chosen by the Libyan people, would not include Colonel Gadhafi. I think that is a given. If the people of Libya had a choice, I think that is what they would be. However, we want to see this as a Libyan-led solution and not one that is affected by military action under the responsibility to protect.

We have to be careful about what we are doing and we have to be careful that we do it in a way that respects the international regime under which we are doing this. The responsibility to protect is an emerging doctrine that is becoming a part of the convention in international law. It is something we must do right because if we do not do it right, it may be very difficult to do it again. That is an important marker to lay down here, that, when talking about this kind of action, a lot of people in this country, and rightly so, are very leery of Canadian involvement in military action outside this country. We have seen from history what happens when we start something and do not know where to finish it.

We have seen that in the Afghanistan conflict. Our party took a very strong position on this. There was a point when we said that we wanted Canada to leave, Canada was not, in our view, to continue the military mission in Afghanistan. We felt it was time to bring that to an end.

• (1305)

We have seen what can happen when we start in one place and all of a sudden something called mission creep takes over. That was the

danger we spoke about on March 21, and it was a danger that we kept repeating when we heard talk of regime change in Libya as part of the goals of this mission. This is something that we want to avoid. Canadians do not want us to get into another quagmire, where we see Canadian involvement to the extent that Canadians did not know what they were supporting in the beginning.

There are many who believe that when we talked about a no-fly zone, it was simply a matter of taking planes out of the air that were going to bomb facilities or bomb civilians. However, the reality set in pretty quickly when bombing missions were taking out anti-aircraft guns and tanks and planes, and their ability to drop bombs on civilians. That shocked some people in this country. When we start taking that further again and start talking about regime change or using loose language, which is irresponsible by the leaders of this country, then Canadians get very worried.

We want, as much as possible, to frame Canada's actions clearly within UN resolution 1973. Our amendments to the motion today are clearly designed to do that, to emphasize that all aspects of UN resolution 1973 must be acted on by government. We have laid out some specific measures that we would want to see in any resolution passed by the House in order to continue this mission.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member for St. John's East that the very precise language he has used regarding objectives on the basis of UN resolutions and other multilateral sources of authority for our operations in Libya coheres with the policy and the understanding of this government on what the objectives are.

Countries like Turkey have a role to play.

If Colonel Gadhafi's forces were to make a demonstrable move away from the operational areas where they have been harming civilians, this would very likely have an impact on NATO targeting, including the targeting of bases and barracks.

I would ask my colleague from St. John's East whether he is not reassured that in this mission so far, given the nature of the application of force by Canadian aircraft and others, the very low number of civilian casualties caused by allied forces is an immensely favourable sign, in the early going of this mission at least, and contributing heavily to the chances of achieving the objective that we all share?

• (1310)

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, we have seen a high level of assessment of targets throughout this mission to date.

My colleague and I asked for and received a very high level and detailed briefing by Foreign Affairs and military officials on how this was operating. We were involved with the Judge Advocate General's office and the Judge Advocate General himself was part of this. We went over in great detail how these targets are chosen, the level of authority given, the ability of the pilots to turn back, which has actually happened, when there is some doubt as to the nature of the target and the possibility of civilians being injured. I know that one error was made in targeting rebel forces as opposed to government forces. There has been a very low level of civilian casualties on the NATO side. That is commendable.

I would also refer hon. members to the article in yesterday's paper where General Bouchard talked in specific detail as to how this actually happens and how missions are turned down and turned back, how missions must be approved at the highest level, even coming back to Ottawa in case of Canadian targets. That is commendable.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the member's comments. It comes across fairly clearly that the New Democrats would strongly oppose the mission involving any form of a regime change. Then when I hear the government members, they seem to be completely at odds with that.

Are there any circumstances where the member could envision Colonel Gadhafi retaining any power whatsoever in a new Libya?

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, I think it is pretty clear that UN resolution 1973 was aimed at achieving a ceasefire as soon as possible and to engage in a settlement of the existing differences and, essentially, to re-establish a new political future in Libya in light of the opposition. It is not up to Canada to decide what that should be. It is up to the Libyan people.

The question is based on a false premise, that we here in Canada, that we in the Canadian government, should decide who should participate in any government of Libya. That is for the Libyan people to decide. That is why our motion talks about a Libyan-led solution to the crisis and to the future of government in Libya. I guess that is the simplest way to put it.

Regime change by a foreign nation is really intervention in someone else's affairs or taking sides in a civil road, which leads us down the slippery slope to intervention in every crisis in the world.

● (1315)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his work on this file. I have been working closely with him.

One of the concerns that many have is how we balance this mission out. We need to see requisite diplomatic supports and engagement with other countries. One of the supports that is very important is the contact group. The government will know that a contact group was formed from UN resolution 1973 and that it has had meetings.

I want to ask my colleague about the importance of Canada participating a little more fervently in the contact group, including in the coming meetings in Turkey, and what Canada can do to ensure that we do more on the diplomatic side because, clearly, that is something that needs more support.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, we hear from this government and heard today a phrase that it likes to use, the "whole of government approach". Now a whole of government approach sounds great; it sounds like something is really happening.

However, whenever I hear that phrase, I immediately ask where is the content? Where is the detail? What part of government is involved? Where is the diplomatic effort? What exactly are we doing on the humanitarian side?

Government Orders

When I hear about whole of government, my conclusion is that there is no answer to that question; it is just the cover the government is using to say that it wants to be more involved.

The contact group is a good example of that. Who was there? I have nothing against the associate minister of defence responsible for procurement, but the associate minister is not the person to send to the contact group on Libya. What is that all about? Where is the Minister of Foreign Affairs? Why is he not there? Or the parliamentary secretary? Or someone else? Or the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, if there are issues related to defence? I do wonder when we talk about that.

We also have to see the specifics. That is why we have these things in our motion. We are hoping to get the kinds of answers that the Canadian people truly want to see, that Canada is doing more than just sending jets to participate in this because the government wants to show we can participate in international affairs and show some leadership, et cetera. These are the talking points that we are hearing from the government, but we want to see some real action on all fronts.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Abbotsford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I heard the media reporting that the Minister of National Defence has said that our operations in Libya have already cost \$26 million and we can expect them to cost even more.

Considering that we have spent \$26 million in just a few months and we will probably spend more between now and September, until we can reposition ourselves on the situation, does my colleague believe that Canada's involvement and the money we have spent have had any influence on the situation in Libya thus far? Does he really believe that Canada has good reason to be involved in the conflict, which seems to be more of an internal conflict in a country that is not Canada?

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, of course, it is another country than Canada.

However, Canada is an international actor. We support the United Nations. We support human rights and we supported the responsibility to protect as a doctrine.

As someone said recently, if we are going to have UN-led world, then there have to be countries willing to participate and support UN actions.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to add my voice to this important debate about Canada's continuing engagement in Libya.

I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Mississauga—Erindale, and focusing these remarks in support of those made by the Minister of National Defence, particularly on our military contribution. I am providing a few more details by way of an update as to the nature of that contribution and its effect on the ground, in the air and on the seas off Libya.

Government Orders

I would like to pay tribute to all members who have spoken so far in this debate for the sense of unity and purpose prevailing in this House so far today, and for the constructive manner and frame of mind in which all have come to this debate today.

• (1320)

[Translation]

The contributions by the Canadian Forces to Operation Mobile give them an opportunity to demonstrate their exceptional capabilities once again. This operation proves that the Canadian Forces continue to maintain a high level of operational readiness and to show the utmost professionalism, which has been true for decades.

As the minister mentioned earlier, the Canadian Forces are once again showing their leadership on the international stage by standing up for the interests and values of Canadians. We are making a vital contribution to NATO's Operation Unified Protector, which aims to enforce UN Security Council Resolution 1973 in order to put an end to violence in Libya.

And it is a Canadian, one of our own, Lieutenant General Charles Bouchard—who is also a gifted communicator, as was clearly demonstrated in the interview he gave in yesterday's *Globe and Mail*—who is the commanding officer.

[English]

The Canadian Forces are playing this key role, alongside NATO allies and partners, in protecting Libyan civilians. However, despite that and in spite of this progress, the Gadhafi regime continues to use violence against its own citizens. It is this conclusion that lies at the base of the need for this debate today.

I want to take this opportunity to expand on the remarkable efforts our military is undertaking as part of Operation Mobile. The current contribution includes three task forces. As the minister said, that represents approximately 650 uniform personnel, but they are broken into three main elements: a coordinating team, Task Force Naples; an air component, Task Force Libeccio; and the naval element, Task Force Charlottetown.

Task Force Naples is our national coordination component linking Canadian expeditionary force command headquarters here in Ottawa with NATO's Combined Joint Task Force Unified Protector headquarters in Europe and coordinating our forces' participation, as well as providing staff for Lieutenant-General Bouchard.

Task Force Libeccio, led by Colonel Alain Pelletier, is our air component for the mission. Canadian aircraft is flying out of two NATO bases in Italy: Trapani Birgi in western Sicily and Sigonella in eastern Sicily. Sicily has featured in our military history in the past, so it is certainly not unknown in the annals of Canadian military operations, but, for the reference of members, people going to Trapani fly with Ryanair. Sigonella, as some may remember, was an air base featured in the terrorist incident in 1985 involving the *Achille Lauro*, a ship that was hijacked on the Mediterranean Sea.

Aircraft currently assigned to the task force include seven CF-18 fighters, two maritime patrol aircraft, two CC-130 Hercules and one CC-150 Polaris air refueller. Our CF-18s operate in pairs with one spare and are high-performance multi-purpose fighters.

The important point is to emphasize the significant role that these assets have played within the NATO effort in the air and on the sea in the roles that they have been given. In particular, our refuelling aircraft, our tankers, have played a vital role in keeping not only Canadian aircraft operating over Libya in surveillance and attack roles but also in search and rescue roles because that is required as pilots enter dangerous parts of airspace and stay in the air longer than otherwise would have been possible.

These are interoperable assets with allied fighters. They are capable of conducting air-to-air and air-to-ground missions. In Libya, they are doing both: enforcing the Security Council mandated low-fly zone above Libya and engaging ground targets, as required, through that very rigorous targeting process led by Lieutenant-General Bouchard, including the authority granted by this House to a government that oversees these operations and throughout the civilian oversight to the military chain of command that NATO is proud to call its own.

Canada is one of only 8 out of NATO's 28 members participating in air-to-ground strikes, which are targeting vehicle and ammunition storage facilities, electronic warfare sites and enemy vehicles. I would like to point out that while the CF-18s are themselves highly versatile platforms, the fact that they departed Canada for Italy in less than three hours after the Prime Minister's announcement on March 18 is testament to the preparedness, responsiveness and flexibility of the Canadian Forces.

Receiving less attention, but no less important, are the refuelling aircraft, vital to the success of the overall campaign. As a NATO spokesman recently said:

This is the most diverse and extensive air-to-air refuelling operation in the history of aviation and is a clear example of the strength and cohesiveness of NATO.

The ability to deliver fuel in the air has allowed NATO strike aircraft to simply do more.

Finally, our Aurora maritime patrol aircraft also play a key part in the operation, conducting surveillance and reconnaissance missions. These missions, conducted mostly in the vicinity of Brega, Misrata and Ajdabiya, provide valuable information about what is happening on the ground.

• (1325)

[Translation]

As for the naval sector, Commander Craig Skjerpen and the crew of HMCS *Charlottetown* have been demonstrating the flexibility of our Halifax class frigates since they arrived in the Mediterranean on March 17. Some 18 NATO ships are patrolling constantly to ensure compliance with the arms embargo. This embargo is having a positive effect, since it is reducing the amount of illegal weaponry getting into Libya and this effect will only increase over time.

While NATO ships are enforcing the embargo, the alliance is ensuring that marine traffic can flow freely, particularly so that humanitarian aid can be sent.

[English]

Charlottetown has also supported mine clearance operations in Misrata Harbour. Last month, for instance, *Charlottetown* escorted Belgian and British mine countermeasure ships while they spent a week clearing Misrata Harbour of dangerous mines that might otherwise have had a devastating effect on civilian maritime traffic. That was crucially important at that time because Gadhafi's forces, as hon. members will recall, had surrounded Misrata on three sides and humanitarian shipments could only enter the city by sea.

It is important to note that while Task Forces Libeccio and *Charlottetown* are doing outstanding work in their respective domains, they are not working independently of one another.

On April 26, while patrolling close to the Libyan coastline, *Charlottetown* tracked vehicles firing rockets near populated areas of Misrata. This information was relayed to Canadian Forces members aboard a NATO airborne warning and control system, which was then passed to air operations in Italy. Canadian CF-18s were airborne in response within minutes. The pilots tracked the origin of fire, confirmed hostile acts being committed against civilians and dropped precision guided bombs to destroy two military vehicles.

That is a very concrete example of how, even when targets are not pre-planned, Canadian air and naval assets work flawlessly together in a coalition environment to prevent civilian casualties.

[Translation]

The Canadian Forces are making a considerable, large-scale effort to ensure the success of Operation Unified Protector. We have demonstrated the versatility and effectiveness of our contribution.

[English]

Given what we have heard today, we on this side of the House have every confidence that there are unprecedented grounds for supporting the motion today. I would encourage all hon. members, not only to support today's motion to continue Canadian engagement but also to take pride in the fact that Canada's unified approach in this House and elsewhere to this mission has been absolutely crucial in securing the international resolve, determination and effort on the ground that is now serving to protect Libyan civilians across that country and to protect some of the gains of the Arab spring. We know they are not yet irreversible, that this complex process throughout the Mediterranean area is still unfolding, but our operation in Libya with NATO under a UN mandate is absolutely vital to giving hope to a beleaguered population.

● (1330)

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was certainly pleased to hear the member opposite give his comment. We had the opportunity to speak to each other during the campaign through the media at various times and I enjoyed the exchanges that we had.

The question before us has to do with resolving a tragic situation in Libya, which all members have shown themselves deeply committed to resolving. I wonder if the member would comment on the request that members of the official opposition have made and others to ensure that, as we proceed, any and all information that is made available will be provided to other members of the House.

Government Orders

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his success in the election as well, which I did have the opportunity to observe more closely, thanks to the magic of televised media across this country.

I can assure the hon. member and other hon. members opposite that the spirit of consultation and of openness that has prevailed so far in this mission through briefings and through debates like this one is one that we wish to continue. Certainly today's debate gives us all the more reason to do so. We must not forget how powerful a tool unity is for the House and for this country when we act together on the basis of unanimity and consensus in this House. It has helped us move other countries in the right direction. It has helped to show determination again to a beleaguered people and it has gone on the best tradition of all parties in the House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are encouraged by the degree to which we are engaged in this debate.

Is it the government's intention to continue to have debates in regard to Libya if further extensions will be required three months from now or in September? Could the member give a clear indication of whether this will be an ongoing commitment by the government to ensure we can continue to build on the consensus by allowing debates of this nature regarding Libya?

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the resolution authorizing this military operation was passed by the Security Council on March 17. If my memory serves, the first debate in this House was four days later. We are having a debate quite soon after the recent general election. The need for further debates will be determined by the situation and by the government, but in consultation with all members.

Because we were awaiting an election call at the time, the first call I heard directly for Canadian involvement in a military role to protect civilians in Libya came from the Hon. Stephen Lewis who was addressing the 60th anniversary of the Ajax Rotary Club on March 17, the very day the resolution was passed. He made a very impassioned plea for just the kind of action that we are taking today and are determined to take for the next three and a half months pending further developments on the ground.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard some figures on the cost of this mission. The total cost estimate is \$60 million. Today, the Rideau Institute has questioned that figure, saying that it is more likely to be in the range of \$80 million to \$85 million. We know the government is not that good with numbers when it comes to military costs and expenditures. Could the member tell us where these numbers come from and how he supports their accuracy?

Government Orders

• (1335)

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the numbers are very accurate. We have no reason to doubt the professionalism of the Canadian Forces in accounting, as in the other fields it must master to mount an operation like this. The cost translates into roughly \$10 million per month. If it changes, we have every intention of informing this House.

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first opportunity to speak since the occurrence of the last election, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Mississauga—Erindale for the trust they have placed in me in returning me to this place to represent them. I pledge to them today that I will work each and every day to the best of my ability to continue to earn that trust as we go forward over the next four years.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my family, friends, supporters and volunteers for their efforts on my behalf in assisting me to return to this place to continue to represent the people of Mississauga—Erindale and the broader city of Mississauga.

I am pleased to participate today in this debate on the motion before the House which seeks the support of members to extend Canada's military engagement in Libya. In March of this year, the House unanimously adopted a motion deploring the ongoing use of violence by the Gadhafi regime against the Libyan people.

Our actions in Libya came after the passage of United Nations Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973 and sought to take all necessary measures to protect civilians and populated areas under threat of attack.

At that time members from all parties stood together in support of Canada's engagement in Libya and for the men and women of the Canadian Forces. It was not then and should not be now an issue for partisan or political games. It is an issue of human rights and we believe that the horrific violence which is being imposed on the Libyan people must come to an end.

Canada has shown international leadership in Libya and from the outset has pushed for swift and decisive action. Abroad we have worked closely with international and regional partners, including the League of Arab States, the African Union, NATO partners and allies to press the regime to comply with its international obligations.

Canada, along with our NATO allies and partners, has called on the Libyan regime to respect a ceasefire and to adhere to the United Nations Resolution 1973. These calls have thus far been ignored.

We have clearly defined the three military objectives of the mission in Libya. First, an end to all attacks and threats of attack against civilians. Second, the withdrawal of the regime's military and paramilitary forces to their bases. Third, full and unhindered access to humanitarian aid to all those who need it across Libya.

None of these demands has been seriously considered by Gadhafi, even less respected. Gadhafi's attacks on his own population are unacceptable and abhorrent. We believe that he is a clear and present threat to both his people and to the stability in the region, a region which has been undergoing an important transition.

Clearly we have reached the point of no return and we need to be forward-looking. The overwhelming majority of Libyan citizens cannot imagine a future or building a civil society in Libya in association with Gadhafi or his inner circle.

The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has requested that arrest warrants be issued for Gadhafi, his son, Saif al-Islam Gadhafi and his brother-in-law, Abdullah Senussi. The prosecutor alleged that these individuals have planned and directed crimes against humanity, that is they have organized widespread and systematic attacks on civilian populations, including murder, torture and persecution.

The International Commission of Inquiry conducted an investigation and also concluded that crimes against humanity and war crimes were being committed by the government forces of Libya.

Canada continues to support calls for Gadhafi's inevitable departure. We are encouraged by the increasing international consensus in that regard.

Consistent with our principle of diplomacy, we are engaging more closely with the legitimate representatives of the Libyan people who commit to stand by democratic and human rights principles and values. People in Benghazi, Misrata and other cities are being empowered to take on the responsibility of protecting civilians, developing policy and administrative structures, and providing urgent social services.

These are transformative moments and we should not underestimate how fragile and unique this period is. Canada will therefore enhance its engagement with the national transitional council which we base on a continued commitment to a vigorous democratic transition, respect for the rule of law and transparent governance.

As clearly expressed at the contact group meeting in the UAE, the national transitional council is endeavouring credible efforts to prepare for the future and set Libya on a decisive path of transition. Canada and its members stand ready to offer support for this process, as well as for the political dialogue led by the very capable UN special envoy, al-Khatib.

It is clear that we expect full compliance with the international humanitarian law and human rights as a new and free Libya takes shape. The national transitional council must ensure the protection of all civilians, including migrants and sub-Saharan Africans.

• (1340)

We welcome and fully support the NTC's vision for a democratic Libya and road map for a political transition.

For all these reasons, Canada considers the interim national council the legitimate representative of the Libyan people.

However, let me be clear. Libya is not ours to reconcile, nor is it ours to reconstruct. The reconciliation and reconstruction of Libya is a project that must be led and undertaken by the Libyan people.

As clearly expressed by the Libya contact group, the UN international regional partners and also Canada, will be there to provide help and support. Just as Canadians are actively engaged in protecting civilians from Gadhafi and his regime, we will also be there as they rebuild their country.

Despite progress that has been made, the reasons for which Parliament voted unanimously to endorse military engagement in Libya still exists today; so do the conditions that prompted the UN and NATO to act. Colonel Gadhafi must go. The Libyan people must be protected. For that reason, it is our position that Canada's role in Libya must continue.

Canada stands in solidarity with the Libyan people and is proud that our contributions will help them to determine their own united, independent and sovereign future.

I encourage all members to once again support this motion.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, let me congratulate the member on his re-election and on his position as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Now the minister two assistants, but these two parliamentary assistants seem to be adding, unfortunately, to the ambiguity of the government's position here.

When the member rises in the House and says, "Gadhafi must go. Gadhafi must go. Therefore, we are continuing our mission", pardon me if I assume from the member's remarks that the mission is to get rid of Gadhafi.

I am not trying to be nuanced here. Nobody likes Mr. Gadhafi, or Colonel Gadhafi, or whatever title he goes by. However, the fact of the matter is this is not about regime change and if the UN resolution is to be followed precisely the way we believe it should, then the talk of the parliamentary secretary is confusing people and is leading to me to wonder whether General Bouchard is right when he says, "My job is not regime change" or whether the parliamentary secretary is when he says "Gadhafi must go. Therefore, we are continuing our mission".

Which is it? We cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I have worked together in the past on the special committee on Afghanistan and I wish to congratulate him on his re-election and his re-appointment as the critic for defence for the New Democratic Party.

The member should know that we are being very clear. Our mission is not regime change. Our mission is to protect the civilians of Libya. As they go forward, it is our view that they will select someone else to lead their country and we will work with the government they choose. The military will not be involved in any way, shape or form in making that change for them. They will make that change themselves.

Our brave men and women are simply there, flying those missions, to protect the civilians from the atrocities that have been allegedly and reportedly committed by the Libyan regime to date.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Calgary East said that Canada was in Libya to promote Canadian values such as democracy and the rule of law.

Government Orders

Then I just heard the member opposite say that Libya is not ours to reconstruct.

I wonder if the member has any opinions going forward, if a new government takes control of Libya, to what extent is Canada willing to guide, forcibly or otherwise, that new government so that democracy and rule of law are present in the new Libya?

• (1345)

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, Canada has supported and continues to support, many countries around the world with the development of democratic institutions. We will continue to work with all the international partners, the United Nations and the regional partners in that region of the world to support the development of democracy in Libya. When it becomes clear what the situation is following the cessation of hostilities, Canada will certainly be supporting the development of democratic institutions.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for his enlightened speech. I think everyone here understands that we are extending the mission to protect civilians in Libya. We know that the military assets that are being used by Colonel Gadhafi have been used against his own people. If we want to bring about the change and the aid that is so desperately needed, we ought to make sure that we provide that type of security. That is really what it is all about.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary to expand upon Canada's role, that we have announced just today, in expanding humanitarian aid. Also, could he explain what we would do to construct the required institutions to support democracy and ensure that the infrastructure is in place to support the transition away from what has been there to hopefully what we would see as a new democracy in Libya?

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, as the member would know, earlier today the hon. Minister of International Cooperation announced an additional \$2 million in aid. That is in addition to the \$8 million that has already been provided to the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which provide support and assistance to victims of gender-based violence.

We will continue to do these sorts of things and our military will continue to protect those who are providing humanitarian assistance to the people who need it in Libya.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising in the House today to support the UN mission in Libya and Canada's participation in it. I join with those who believe that this mission is justified and that it should be extended because of Moammar Gadhafi's actions towards the Libyan people. The sad reality of the situation in Libya is that the real victims of Colonel Gadhafi's lust for power are the civilians. Make no mistake about it, Libya's civilians are not just collateral damage from a conflict between two factions. They are being directly targeted by Colonel Gadhafi and his armed forces.

Government Orders

And this is not coming from marginal sources with questionable information. It is coming from organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the International Criminal Court. As a result of an investigation, the International Criminal Court prosecutor concluded that Gadhafi personally ordered attacks on unarmed civilians, that he authorized the use of aircraft to attack protesters, that his troops attacked Libyan civilians in their homes and in public areas, that he posted snipers outside mosques to kill people leaving after prayer and that he used heavy artillery to fire on funeral processions.

This is not the only source of evidence. A mission by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to Tripoli and rebel-held areas found evidence that Gadhafi's troops had attacked civilians, workers and medical units. For its part, Human Rights Watch has documented serious violations of the laws of war by Libyan forces, including indiscriminate attacks in residential areas in Misrata and in the villages of the Nafusa mountains. In February, Amnesty International also found overwhelming evidence of the use of lethal force against protesters who posed no threat and were directly targeted.

This evidence clearly shows that Colonel Gadhafi's actions do not respect the laws of war and that some of these actions could be condemned as war crimes. These violent attacks against the population justify the intervention of the international community because history has shown that action must be taken in such situations and that prompt action is vital.

When I was a member of the Canadian Forces, a number of colleagues spoke to me about their experiences in countries ravaged by civil war. Whether it was Rwanda or Yugoslavia, they talked about horrible situations in which no child should be involved.

The quick adoption of resolution 1973 and the rapid deployment of international forces to put in place a no-fly zone must be applauded. However, history shows us that it is also important to act with a clearly defined mandate. For that reason it is vital to clearly define the mandate of the troops deployed, to establish a specific time frame, and to target interventions based on clearly-defined objectives, those set out by the UN resolution. We must put a stop to attacks against civilians. Libyan military and paramilitary forces must return to their bases, and humanitarian aid must be accessible to all those in need.

● (1350)

[English]

The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has investigated and has drawn conclusion of the following allegations of war crimes.

The evidence shows that Moammar Gadhafi personally ordered attacks on unarmed Libyan civilians, including the use of aircraft to attack protesters. His forces attacked Libyan civilians in their homes and in public space, repressed demonstrations with live ammunition, used heavy artillery against participants in funeral processions and placed snipers to kill those leaving mosques after the prayers. Gadhafi forces have lists with the names of alleged dissidents. They are being arrested, put into prisons in Tripoli, tortured and made to disappear.

The UN Human Rights Council's mission to Tripoli and rebel-held areas in late April found evidence of war crimes by Gadhafi's forces, including attacks on civilians, aid workers and medical units. Aircraft, tanks, artillery grad rockets and snipers were used. It also found some evidence of crimes by opposition armed forces, including the arbitrary detention and torture of suspected Gadhafi supporters. The commission did not find evidence that the opposition armed forces were part of any widespread or systematic attacks against the civilian population.

Human Rights Watch has documented serious violations of the laws of war by Libyan government forces, including repeat indiscriminate attacks into residential neighbourhoods in Misrata and towns in the western Nafusa Mountains.

Amnesty International has also found clear evidence of the use of lethal force against protesters in February and, more worrying still, that in many cases protesters who posed no threat were deliberately killed.

The International Criminal Court is also investigating allegations that Gadhafi ordered his troops to commit the systematic rape of women in rebel-held areas, based on information that Gadhafi himself authorized the rapes and provided drugs to enhance the ability of his force to rape women. Due to the social stigma associated with reporting rape and the displacement of civilians, it is difficult to know how widespread the use of rape as a weapon of war is, but the ICC has received information that there are several hundred victims in some areas.

● (1355)

[Translation]

As far as humanitarian aid is concerned, the situation in Libya is alarming. It is estimated that between 10,000 and 15,000 people have been killed in the past four months of combat; close to half a million civilians have left their homes and fled the country since the crisis started; another 330,000 people in the country have had to leave their homes to seek shelter elsewhere in Libya. These people have to live with very little and face shortages of food and water. They have almost no access to medicines and are unable to travel because of fuel shortages.

The situation is even worse at the border with Tunisia, where Tunisian authorities are struggling to receive thousands of Libyan refugees who want to flee their country. The United Nations estimates that as many as 3.6 million people could be in need of humanitarian assistance and that is where our government can and must do more. So far, only half the United Nations' requests for aid have been met.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

If we talk about people being killed, an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 people have been killed on both sides in four months of fighting in Libya. Almost 500,000 people have left the country since the crisis began, while about 330,000 people have been internally displaced. It is estimated by the UN that at least 1,000 people, mainly men, have been kidnapped or have disappeared in Misrata since the conflict began in February.

The UN refugee agency reports that tens of thousands of people on both sides of the battle lines in Libya are facing a critical shortage of essential goods, including food, medicine and fuel.

The situation on the Tunisian border is increasingly strained as Tunisian authorities struggle to absorb the tens of thousands of Libyans fleeing the conflict. Under the United Nations' worst-case scenario, as many as 3.6 million people in the country could eventually require humanitarian assistance.

This is why we have to support those people. We need to be there to support all the women and all the people living in Libya.

[Translation]

There are probably people in Canada of Libyan origin and I sincerely believe they would be proud that we are supporting them. I would not want to have to inform any of them that their family members back in Libya had been killed or raped. I believe we must support them out of respect for human rights. These people have the right to feel safe in their homes.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member will have 10 minutes remaining for questions and comments when the House continues the debate on the motion.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in its 2009 annual report, Canada Post confirmed its profitability for the 15th year in a row. It had consolidated net income of \$281 million on revenues of \$7.3 billion.

Canada Post's enabling legislation provides that this public service must be financially self-sufficient, not that it must seek to obtain profit at any cost or at the expense of providing equitable service everywhere, particularly in small communities.

The federal government must give clear instructions to Canada Post's management to make postal workers an offer that respects the spirit of the Canada Post Corporation Act. The government's current inaction regarding this labour dispute must not lead to the possibility of imposing special legislation that is unfair to those who helped build this crown corporation.

• (1400)

[English]

DON VALLEY EAST

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I happily stand in this House for the first time, being sent here by the constituents of Don Valley East. I thank them for their trust and confidence in electing me as their federal representative.

I am pleased to report that Don Valley East has already benefited from our economic action plan. In collaboration with the province and the city, there has been investment in major projects in our community such as upgrades to Victoria Park, trail and path rehabilitation of Anewan Greenbelt and Rowena Park, and marquee tourism events, just to name a few.

My constituents have expressed their support for our economic action plan and the recently tabled budget that promises to invest in our communities, businesses and social programs.

I thank all those who worked tirelessly for me on my campaign and continue to support me. I especially thank my wife, Lan, who has been by my side throughout this journey.

* * *

[Translation]

LAURENTIDES—LABELLE

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is my maiden speech in the House, and I would like to thank the people of Laurentides—Labelle for their clear confidence in me.

I would particularly like to congratulate the participants and organizers of the fourth Mont-Laurier Relay for Life, who helped make the June 10 event a huge success. Three hundred teams walked all night in a relay around the track behind the Saint-Joseph composite school to raise money for the fight against cancer. The 1,200 participants raised over \$264,000.

I had the honour to address the participants, volunteers and organizers who have set an example for this House. They expect us to work constructively towards the common good, despite our differences.

* * *

[English]

PARLIAMENTARY OUTDOORS CAUCUS

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform my colleagues, both new and experienced, about the Parliamentary Outdoors Caucus, a non-partisan group which represents the Canadian heritage activities of hunting, fishing, sport shooting and trapping.

As the largest federal all-party caucus during the last Parliament, our goal is to preserve and promote these pursuits, protect them in law, and encourage the public to accept them as traditional outdoor heritage activities.

Statements by Members

Millions of rural and urban Canadians of all political affiliations, backgrounds, ages and abilities contribute over \$10 billion annually to the national economy, and support over 100,000 jobs through fishing and hunting activities.

I cordially invite all MPs and senators from all parties to read the information that has been sent to their offices about the Outdoors Caucus and join us as we ensure that these activities, our collective heritage, remain available to all Canadians.

* * *

BAIE-D'URFÉ

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the centennial of the town of Baie-d'Urfé in my riding of Lac-Saint-Louis.

On May 9, I attended a meeting of the Baie-d'Urfé junior council that re-enacted two of the town's earliest council meetings held on July 18 and September 16, 1911, respectively.

The junior council was created in 2008 under the leadership of Mayor Maria Tutino as a vehicle to allow Baie-d'Urfé's youth to get involved in decisions affecting their quality of life and as a way for them to learn about democratic government.

[Translation]

The junior council has already exerted its influence over a number of decisions, including installing fountains, building a safety fence at Allan's Hill and purchasing basketball nets for Picardy Park.

[English]

On May 12 the junior council elected its first cabinet with portfolios ranging from treasurer to security, environment, recreational activities and intercultural relations.

[Translation]

I invite all of the hon. members to spread the news of Baie-d'Urfé's junior council in the cities and towns in their ridings.

* * *

[English]

MANITOBA FLOODS

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the constituents of Winnipeg South for allowing me to humbly stand before you again in this House.

I would also like to thank my wife Chantale for her constant support and advice through the years, as well as the support from our children Luke and Sarah.

During the recent campaign we experienced significant flooding in my province and in my riding. I would like to thank the campaign volunteers who put down their brochures and picked up sandbags to help the many residents who were at risk of flooding.

I am sure all parliamentarians will join me in expressing our sympathy for flood victims who are dealing with the devastating flooding that has gripped so many in our country.

I would like to express thanks to all the municipal leaders, emergency measures staff, and countless volunteers and military for all the help that they have given us.

I would also like to thank the Prime Minister for his commitments to this flood fight and for the significant investment that was made in the Manitoba floodway which once again saved my riding as it has many times in the past. While we cannot prevent these natural disasters, we can work with other levels of government to mitigate these disasters in the future.

I would also like to make mention of my Liberal opponent who also set aside his campaign to help the flood fight.

* * *

• (1405)

YOUTH CHARITABLE PROGRAM

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to recognize Canadian Tire Jumpstart Day held on May 28.

Canadian Tire Jumpstart is a community-based charitable program that helps financially disadvantaged youth participate in organized sports and recreation by covering registration fees, equipment and transportation costs. Of the customer donations to Canadian Tire Jumpstart, 100% is reinvested in the local community.

One in three Canadian families struggle to include their children in sport and recreation activities due to financial barriers. This year Canadian Tire Jumpstart reached its goal of \$3 million raised and is well on its way to helping 30,000 children this summer.

The Government of Canada has been a major supporter of Canadian Tire Jumpstart and since the program's inception in 2005, it has helped more than 300,000 children.

I would like to congratulate it on its success and ask each member of the legislature to join me in recognizing the great work Canadian Tire Jumpstart is doing for families across our country.

* * *

GRAND VALLEY

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize the 150th anniversary of the town of Grand Valley.

First settled by the Joyce family in 1855, Grand Valley was originally known as Joyce's Corners. The first municipal council was formed in 1860 led by Reeve George Todd, some of whose descendants maintain their residence in Grand Valley to this very day.

From 1860 to 1886, the village was called Luther Village, at which point it was named Grand Valley for the beautiful Grand River which meanders through the downtown.

Today, Grand Valley is home to several community organizations, including the Lion's Club, the horticultural society, and the Grand Valley historical society.

Statements by Members

On the weekend of July 1, Grand Valley's current mayor, John Oosterhof, will join with residents and visitors to celebrate the town's 150th anniversary.

I ask that the House join me in congratulating the residents of Grand Valley as they mark this milestone.

* * *

[Translation]

TROIS-RIVIÈRES

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am both moved and proud to be speaking for the first time in this House on behalf of the people of Trois-Rivières.

The people of Trois-Rivières who provided me with this opportunity come from all political parties, and I wish to thank them for their support.

Many of them heard and believed in the NDP's message about working together to find solutions to the issues affecting them.

I still have hope that the government will be open, given that many Canadians did not put their trust in the Conservatives. Canadians still expect their voices to be heard.

At a time when then the government is preparing to revisit representation here in the House, why not give real weight to each citizen's vote by implementing a system of proportional representation? And why not give Quebec the status it deserves as a founding nation and as a distinct society?

* * *

[English]

LIBYA

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 2 Canadians gave this government a strong mandate to represent Canada's interests and values at home and abroad.

Since coming to office, our Conservative government has implemented a principled foreign policy, as in Libya where Colonel Gadhafi has been waging war against innocent civilians, the very people he claims to represent. According to reports, his despicable actions include the torture of children and the use of rape as a weapon of war.

Our Conservative government has not and will not ignore the plight of the Libyan people. It is why we recognize the national transitional council as the legitimate representative of the Libyan people. It is why we have pledged more humanitarian funding, including funds to help victims of sexual violence.

Today, we seek the unanimous consent of the House of Commons to extend the Canadian aspect of the NATO effort in Libya. We cannot sit idly by as Gadhafi's thirst for power continues to oppress the Libyan people and claim innocent lives.

I urge all members of this House to stand today and vote for the Libyan people.

• (1410)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians chose a strong, stable majority Conservative government that will deliver on improving the financial security of Canadian families. We intend to do just that.

This weekend, the members of the NDP will be discussing many issues at their party convention. Before they discuss any trade resolutions, I urge them to think about jobs for hard-working families. The NDP cannot claim to be concerned with creating new jobs while putting forward resolutions calling for a complete withdrawal from free trade agreements.

International trade is a kitchen table issue. It creates jobs, increases prosperity, and accounts for almost 60% of our annual GDP.

The NDP has opposed every single free trade deal that our government has put forward since 2006. Its platform does not mention free trade even once. This is a stark policy difference between this Conservative government and the NDP.

We call on the NDP to stand up for jobs and to stand up for free trade.

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HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, within an hour we will be commemorating national Holocaust Remembrance Day.

We will be remembering horrors too terrible to be believed but not too terrible to have happened, with universal lessons: the dangers of state-sanctioned incitement of genocide where, as the courts have put it, the Holocaust did not begin in the gas chambers, it began with words; the danger of the oldest and most enduring of hatreds, anti-Semitism, reminding us that while it may begin with Jews it does not end with Jews; the danger of indifference and inaction in the face of evil, as with the genocides in Rwanda and Darfur, reminding us that nobody could say we did not know, we knew but did not act; and the danger of a culture of impunity, which only encourages and abets further atrocity.

We will be remembering the rescuers, the righteous among the nations, who demonstrated that one person, as in the case of Raoul Wallenberg, who is an honorary citizen of Canada, can stand up against evil, prevail and transform history.

Finally, we will be remembering the heroes among us today, the survivors and their families who endured the worst of humanity—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laval.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]***SOCIAL ISSUES**

Mr. José Nunez-Melo (Laval, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to once again congratulate all the newly elected and re-elected members who are here with us. I would also like to thank the voters of Laval who have given me the privilege of representing them in this House.

Our community also faces the challenges we spoke about during the course of the last election. We all know people who lie awake at night worrying about their retirement income or seniors who are unable to make ends meet. I spoke with people in my riding who are unable to find a family doctor, who have to wait for months to see a specialist and who are wondering if the health insurance system will still be in place for their children.

* * *

LIBYA

Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 2, Canadians gave our government a solid mandate to represent the interests and values of Canada at home and abroad.

Since taking power, our Conservative government has implemented a foreign policy based on these principles. It is no longer a matter of blindly following others for the sake of harmonious relations.

In Libya, Colonel Moammar Gadhafi is waging war on innocent civilians. There are reports of vile acts such as the torture of children and the use of rape as a weapon of war. Today, we are requesting the unanimous consent of the House to extend the mission by Canada and NATO to protect Libyans from the Gadhafi regime.

That is why we have committed more funding for humanitarian purposes. Some funds will go to help the victims of sexual violence. That is also why we now recognize the national transitional council as the legitimate representative of the Libyan people. We encourage the other parties to support our efforts. We cannot stand by as Gadhafi continues to oppress the people of Libya and take innocent lives.

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● (1415)

*[English]***BILL HUSSEY**

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people of Scarborough Southwest lost a true hero last week with the passing of World War II veteran, Bill Hussey.

Mr. Hussey volunteered for many years, helping first and second graders learn to read at Courcelette Public School. Every student who attended the school over the last 30 years knew Mr. Hussey and were so fond of him that they dedicated a playground to him at the school in 2004.

Every year on Remembrance Day, Mr. Hussey would proudly wear his medals and his poppy and help the children pay tribute to Canada's veterans and fallen heroes. He served in the special forces in World War II, once parachuting behind enemy lines in Italy. He

would often share his memories of the war with the children and staff at the school.

Mr. Hussey was a kind, caring and gentle man who everyone knew as "Smiley". Mostly he was a legend to the staff and students of Courcelette Public School, and we in Scarborough Southwest will truly miss our hero.

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*[Translation]***SOCIAL ISSUES**

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on May 2, voters in the riding of Joliette decided to vote for change, and it is an honour for me to represent them.

I wish to extend a special thank you to my husband for his help. He has stood as an NDP candidate on six occasions. I would like to thank all my team members for their support and also the many volunteers who worked on my behalf.

In the riding of Joliette, there are families and seniors who have trouble making ends meet at the end of the month. This situation is unacceptable. I have been working for more than 30 years for a better society, for the betterment of women and families, and I will continue to do so.

I do not understand how anyone can vote against the NDP amendment to improve the living conditions of Canadians, to lift seniors out of poverty, to help low-income families and, finally, to stop—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

* * *

*[English]***THE BUDGET**

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic action plan has overseen more than 560,000 net new jobs created since July 2009.

We are on the right track with our recovery, but there is still work to be done to ensure that growth continues. We need to move to the next phase of Canada's economic action plan by ensuring quick passage of the budget before Parliament rises next week. The quick passage of our budget legislation will ensure that job creation continues.

This is a budget that contains numerous initiatives in support of Canada's forestry, mining, manufacturing, agriculture and aerospace sectors. This is a budget that the Canadian Chamber of Commerce said "—will continue to support the economic recovery and help Canadian businesses prosper and compete".

This is a budget that opposition members should get behind. We urge all opposition members to fully support budget 2011 and Canada's economic recovery.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

LIBYA

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want assurance that the involvement in Libya will be in strict accordance with United Nations resolution 1973. That means it has to focus on civilian protection, humanitarian assistance and diplomatic support for the UN efforts to reach a ceasefire so that there can be, ultimately, a Libyan-led political resolution to the crisis. That is precisely what the New Democrat amendments to the motion propose today.

Will the government support our proposals?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has undertaken its involvement in Libya under United Nations resolution 1973, in concert with our allies. We have made it very clear all along that we are seeking the furtherance of that resolution and its objectives, and those will continue to be our actions.

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): I will assume that is a yes, Mr. Speaker, but I guess we will wait to see the results of the vote.

Yesterday, the Minister of Foreign Affairs responded to our suggestion that there be increased humanitarian support for the people of Libya and gave confirmation today that there will be an additional \$2 million provided.

Now the question is what is the timetable for that help and how can we be sure that the government is taking the actions necessary to achieve the ceasefire so that the help can actually get to the people?

Could we have an explanation of how that is going to be done?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government remains committed to being a humanitarian partner in Libya and to doing at least our share of the international effort there in that regard.

Obviously, delivering humanitarian aid is extremely difficult in some parts of the country under the circumstances, but we continue to work with our international partners, international agencies and others to facilitate passage of that aid.

[Translation]

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the most frequent problem with this government, this administration, is a lack of co-operation and transparency when it comes to the cost of operations, such as the operation in Libya.

Can the Prime Minister commit to having his team work with the Standing Committee on National Defence to ensure that the same high degree of transparency and availability of information adopted by some of our allies will also be adopted by this government?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to being as transparent as possible. Clearly, we will work with the House committees or through other mechanisms to ensure that any information that can be made available is made available.

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, peaceful democratic protesters in the Middle East and North Africa have inspired all Canadians. Sadly, in Libya, Gadhafi sent in his army to savagely crush protests.

New Democrats supported the UN's call to protect the people of Libya. However, we know that in the end it will be a diplomatic solution that will end the crisis in Libya.

To that end, I want to ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs, will he be attending the next contact group meeting and reaffirm Canada's support for a Libyan-led political solution?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is tremendously proud of our commitment to freedom, to democracy, to human rights, to the rule of law. Our government is proud of the work that our men and women in uniform are doing in Libya. We want to work to increase our diplomatic efforts to end the violence and to protect civilians and our humanitarian efforts. It is certainly my intention to be at the next Libya contact group meeting.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the motion on Libya deplores the ongoing human rights violations being committed by the Gadhafi regime. Reports show that sexual violence is being used as a weapon of war. Deploping the situation is not enough. We must take action to protect the rights of Libyans.

Will Canada make a tangible commitment to the international community to support the investigation of these crimes and bring the perpetrators to justice?

[English]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, in fact, the Minister of International Cooperation made an announcement in Rome of \$2 million more in humanitarian aid to Libya. Part of that money is going to targeted intervention and assistance programs that will help up to 50,000 women and girls in Libya who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing gender-based violence.

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GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that Canadians are expecting is that ministers and cabinet will in fact lead by example, yet at the same time we are seeing lots of announcements about cuts being made to the public service and to the services themselves, the Prime Minister has one of the largest cabinets in Canadian history. The ad budget has gone up by 215%. Just before the election the government announced separation packages for its own employees.

What is, the story here? Where is the consistency?

Oral Questions

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): In fact, Mr. Speaker, a reduction of ministerial budgets is one of the things we have done as part of our efforts to restrain costs. There has been an \$11 million reduction in ministerial budgets this year. That is, of course, over and above the fact that these budgets are lower than they were during the period of the Liberal Party.

In terms of advertising, there was a significant amount of advertising linked to the economic action plan. Obviously, as that is expiring, the advertising budgets will be falling as well.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hard fact remains that he has put a minister in charge of government restraint who is himself responsible for a \$50 million expenditure that he could not explain, that he could not justify, for which there was no documentation, including for gazebos, the paving of roads, whatever it might have be. There was no documentation whatsoever, and that is the minister who is now in charge of helping Canadians to deal with the new economic climate in which we find ourselves.

Again, there is a double standard: one standard for ministers, one standard for—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Of course, Mr. Speaker, I have answered questions on that before and the assertions of the leader of the Liberal Party in this regard are not true.

As I indicated in my previous answer, there have been significant expenditures on this side of the House in terms of reductions of ministers' offices, for example. I would encourage the Liberal Party to join us in this frugality and in cutting that taxpayer-funded subsidy to political parties.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that the government has one standard for cabinet, one standard for the Conservatives, one standard for ministers' ridings; then there is another reality for Canadians throughout the country.

The Prime Minister's agenda does not have the necessary credibility because he is proposing one thing for those in power and another for Canada's middle class. This is the problem we have with the Conservative government's approach.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this party's priority is hard-working Canadian families. That has always been our priority on this side of the House. That is the reason why we were elected by the people of Canada, and Canadians want to see that we have credibility, something that the Liberal Party is lacking.

BUDGET CUTS

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government promised Canadians a magic trick: a painless reduction of the size of government. The real plan is to make major cuts. Yesterday, the Parliamentary Budget Officer expressed his concerns. Other experts have said that these cuts will have serious consequences. The government cannot tell Canadians what it plans on cutting, maybe because it does not even know itself.

Why is the government playing Russian roulette with public services?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, we have a strong mandate to eliminate the deficit by 2014-15. We intend to do just that. I would just say to the hon. member that when she looks at the complete information, she will find that internal services and capital and personnel costs are part of the operating budgets being reduced and that, in fact, the numbers do add up.

Of course, we are committed to achieving the \$1.8 billion in savings by freezing the operating budgets of the departments and we are in fact on track in doing so.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government could not be less clear, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer was very clear. The government does not have a plan. Sure, it is promising to kill the deficit, but how and what will the consequences be? Ask any premier, doctor, professor, patient or student what happened when the Liberals cut the deficit in the 1990s. It was not pretty.

I have a simple question. Will the minister show us his plan or is he hoping for some Oz wizardry?

• (1430)

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the time, it was actually started by our fine Minister of Finance in budget 2011. Some savings were already achieved as a result of our strategic reviews in that regard.

We are on track and we are developing the new plan, the strategic and operating review, which is fully intending to review the spending covering \$80 billion worth of direct program spending.

All of that will be reviewed because we will meet our target and we will meet our promises to the Canadian people. That is why the government is with the Canadian people. They want to see a balanced budget and we do too.

[Translation]

ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we now know some of the cuts the Prime Minister was planning to make. He was planning on making massive cuts to Environment Canada, human resources and aboriginal affairs. But the worst is the plan to cut 33% of the jobs at Canadian Heritage. What is the government's priority? It would rather invest in prisons.

Why does the government think that prisons are more important than heritage?

Oral Questions

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is completely untrue. Canada is the only G8 country that decided not to cut, not to maintain, but to increase its funding for culture.

[English]

I would like to say as well that what we have done over the past years within the Department of Canadian Heritage is reduce the size of the department by 13%, while maintaining our commitment to arts and cultural and Canadian heritage across the country.

We have made the bureaucracy smaller, we have made the department smaller while maintaining our commitment to Canadians and standing up for Canadian culture.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is the government's job creation priority, hiring more prison guards?

Let us be serious. In Canada, culture is a multibillion dollar industry. It creates real jobs. It gives hope. It shows Canada at its best. Cutting Heritage Canada by a third is bad cultural policy and bad economics.

How can the minister justify encouraging us to take something away from society rather than make it richer?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): We should read between the lines of his question, Mr. Speaker. What he is saying is make the department bigger, thereby taking funding away from culture. That is not the way to do it.

We believe in supporting culture, not making the bureaucracy bigger. Members opposite have it exactly backward.

By doing what we have done, which is making bureaucracy smaller and making more money available, it makes room available for what we proposed in budget 2011, which is the \$500 per child arts tax credit so that children can get involved in the arts, performing arts, language, so they can participate in Canada's cultural mosaic. That is good culture policy, not NDP policy.

[Translation]

G8 SUMMIT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, everyone agrees that it is scandalous that \$50 million was taken from the border infrastructure fund to fund projects in the riding of the minister hosting the G8 summit. The fact that this same minister is now in charge of the Treasury Board is also scandalous and source of worry for the country's taxpayers. Even more disconcerting is that the minister does not even try to explain his actions.

Can someone at least try to justify these poor choices and finally give us some real answers?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 32 public infrastructure projects were supported. Each of the 32 projects was completed on time. Each of the 32 projects was

fully accounted for and every single dollar was spent on public infrastructure.

I do notice that it is not only the President of the Treasury Board who is speaking glowingly about all these public infrastructure projects, I have a news release from a former Liberal MP, Anthony Rota, saying he is expressing his pleasure with the minister's announcement that the government has approved a funding request for the Jack Garland Airport. How was that funded? Out of the G8 legacy fund.

Even the Liberals are supporting these great public infrastructure projects.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the minister was taking advantage of the money in the border infrastructure fund, the Canada Border Services Agency had to close three posts and reduce hours in order to save money.

Can the President of the Treasury Board—yes, the President of the Treasury Board—tell the Canadians who will be affected by these cuts and who will have to wait in line at customs this summer how the investments in his riding, 300 kilometres from the border, will help reduce congestion? How will that shorten line-ups at the border?

● (1435)

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the government did is use the authority of an existing program to fast-track these public infrastructure projects at the height of the global economic downturn.

These investments were all part of Canada's economic action plan, a plan that has helped to create 560,000 net new jobs.

The member opposite may not be aware, but because of that economic action plan Canada is leading the advanced economies, and because of that economic action plan this Minister of Finance was named the best minister of finance in the world.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board seems incapable of standing in this House and explaining his \$50 million pork spree in Muskoka.

It is so bad that he has friend, the foreign affairs minister claiming that the Muskoka gravy train was developed by public servants. It is simply not true.

The Auditor General's report is clear, and I will quote: Senior officials said "their input had not been sought".

This deal was cooked up by the member from Muskoka. Public servants were deliberately frozen out.

When will the minister take responsibility for his abuse of public trust?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just because the member opposite says something does not mean it is true.

Oral Questions

Here is what we did. We supported investments to help Canada host the G8 with infrastructure, resurfacing the runway of an airport, resurfacing a provincial highway, and building the G8 centre which is now a community centre.

Each of those projects was approved by the minister of infrastructure of the day. Each of those projects came in fully on budget. For each of those projects, there is a full contribution agreement that was negotiated with the municipality. These are all good projects.

The Auditor General gave some advice on better transparency and better clarity and we fully accepted that counsel.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of disturbing elements to this scandal.

First, of course, is the minister's flagrant abuse of the public trust. Second, now that he has been caught, is the way he hides behind the foreign affairs minister.

Given the sheer scale of this dubious spending and the fact that he is in Treasury Board, how can we trust this minister? It is like putting Dracula in charge of the blood bank.

Where is the accountability? Where is the transparency?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would say to the member for Timmins—James Bay that we should give him a pass on the civility for that question, because it was quite funny.

Here is the reality. We supported 32 public infrastructure projects. Each of them had a negotiated contribution agreement with the local municipality.

The Auditor General has come forward and given us counsel and advice on what we might do better on the intake process for public infrastructure projects and on reporting to Parliament where there could be greater clarity and greater transparency.

We thank the Auditor General for her work and fully accept her recommendations.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am listening but I am not hearing accountability. I am hearing bafflebaggab.

Since the member from Muskoka cannot stand up and defend his actions, I will turn to his friend and I will ask him why he allowed the minister to cook up this deal to bypass all the checks and balances? Why did he allow \$50 million in border infrastructure to be divvied up by the three amigos, the mayor, the minister and the hotel manager?

Since the member from Muskoka will not apologize to this House, will his friend take responsibility and apologize to the Canadian people for his partner's misuse of public funds?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as to the three individuals the member mentioned, none of these three individuals approved a single project.

All of the projects were approved by the minister of infrastructure, by me. All 32 projects are public infrastructure projects, things like paving provincial highways, constructing a new runway and a

community centre. We used the existing authorities under the border infrastructure fund.

The Auditor General has made advice and counsel that we could be more open and more transparent in terms of Parliament. We fully accept the Auditor General's advice and thank her for her good work.

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CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a great sense of anxiety continues to grow across this country as the labour dispute continues with Canada Post.

Business operators, rural residents and seniors are all beginning to feel the pain of this current dispute. We have seen actions taken on both sides that further enhanced that. This can certainly contribute to long-term hurt and long-term pain for the corporation.

I would ask the minister if she has placed a deadline on mediation? If not, will she?

• (1440)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is exactly correct in what he says. We are beginning to see these rolling strikes, and the means by which Canada Post is dealing with these rolling strikes, affect the average Canadian, seniors and business in general.

That is why it is important for us to continue to monitor the situation. We want the parties to reach an agreement as soon as possible. I have written to them. I have met with them separately. The parties should be strongly encouraged to reach a deal on their own accord.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, those are fine words, but the reality is that the Canada Post strike is now 11 days old. Today, 15,000 people in Toronto and Montreal are on strike. In addition, Air Canada began striking at midnight. Travel season is upon us. This will have a major impact on the economy, but a negotiated settlement is the preferred solution.

Will the minister take responsibility and require the parties to sit down and negotiate in good faith to come to an agreement? Canadians and Quebecers need it.

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I briefly indicated, I have met with the parties separately. I have met with the parties together on a number of occasions. I have written the parties directly, asking them to show good faith to the Canadian public to make sure that they are doing the best they can to reach a deal, to be focused on getting a deal, and to make sure that they are looking after the Canadian public's interest.

The obligation is for these two parties to reach a deal. At some point, we have to make sure that the Canadian public's interest is protected.

PENSIONS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today over 55,000 working Canadians are walking off the job in order to fight for their pensions. Why are they doing this? They know that the Conservative government's inaction is leaving employees and employers to sort the pension crisis out for themselves.

Just like the government failed pensioners at Nortel, pension security is now on the block at Canada Post and Air Canada. Inaction, rhetoric and empty promises are not a plan.

When will the government get serious about helping Canadians plan for their retirement?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are all concerned about the labour disputes that seem to be centred over pensions. Let me assure the hon. member and the House that this government is doing the best it can to make sure that we are protecting those Canadians who actually do not have a pension, and that is many Canadians.

We are putting in place a plan in conjunction with our provincial partners, a pooled registered pension plan that would cover all of those Canadians and provide an opportunity for all of those Canadians who do not have a pension as of this day.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the wake of the Auditor General's report that the government has turned a blind eye to first nations, we discover it has an eye on them after all, a covert surveillance operation.

A document entitled "Aboriginal Hot Spots and Public Safety" reveals that INAC, RCMP and CSIS have spied on so-called aboriginal hot spots. It is not about guns and drugs. It is about aboriginal disputes over lands, resources, fisheries and budget shortfalls.

Will this covert surveillance continue despite the newly announced first nations joint action plan?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we respect the right of all Canadians to engage in peaceful protest and we remain committed to ensuring the rights, health and safety of all citizens are respected.

My department does monitor all emergencies, such as floods, fires and civil unrest on an ongoing basis. This facilitates quick support and response as needed to any emergency.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP rationalizes spy operations due to mounting frustrations with unresolved land claims and conflicts over treaty, hunting and fishing rights, environmental impacts, sovereignty issues, and economic and social concerns.

Surely Canadians would agree it is reasonable to be frustrated when their children lack clean drinking water, access to safe schools and decent housing.

When will the government get its priorities straight and focus its efforts on ensuring the well-being of aboriginal peoples?

Oral Questions

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is illustrative today that we had the native police and the RCMP in a collaborative arrangement called in by the community to take out lawbreakers in the Mohawk communities. This is something that is a real concern and something that we need to do.

We are working collaboratively on all kinds of fronts. That is why we came up with a joint action plan working with the National Chief last week. We are collaborating and we are getting things done.

• (1445)

[Translation]

ASBESTOS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada has spent more than a decade trying to stop asbestos from being placed on the Rotterdam Convention list of hazardous materials. We have now learned that Health Canada informed the government of the dangers associated with asbestos and recommended that this product be added to the list. The Conservatives ignored this advice.

Will this government reconsider and allow asbestos to be added to the Rotterdam Convention list?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, for more than 30 years, Canada has promoted the safe and controlled use of chrysotile at home and abroad. In addition, scientific publications show that chrysotile can be used safely under controlled conditions.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is not true.

[English]

This is a simple issue. This is about protecting lives. This is about ensuring materials are used safely.

The Conservatives allowed the exportation of 750,000 tonnes of asbestos in 2006, particularly to the developing world where workers are least protected. One hundred thousand people a year are killed from asbestos.

Will the government finally put lives ahead of politics and allow this deadly product to be listed under the UN's Rotterdam Convention?

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, for more than 30 years, Canada has promoted the safe and controlled use of chrysotile at home and abroad. The premier of Quebec himself said, "The government has not changed its mind. It will continue to defend the safe use of chrysotile, a policy that should be defended."

Earlier, he said, "Quebec promotes the safe use of chrysotile. That is what we do at home and that is what is encouraged throughout the world."

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*[English]***LIBYA**

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, following the passing of the United Nations Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973, Canada and its NATO partners took action in Libya to defend the lives of its innocent civilians who found themselves under siege by the regime of Colonel Gadhafi.

Would the Minister of Foreign Affairs please tell this House what it will take to ensure that Canada's ongoing efforts to protect the people of Libya are successful?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reasons that Parliament voted unanimously back in March to impose sanctions against the Libyan regime and undertake a UN sanctioned mission exist today. We are there to protect the vulnerable civilian population that is under attack by its own government.

We believe the military mission is incredibly important but so too is adding humanitarian support, additional diplomatic measures and, as has been suggested by others in the House, support for good governance from the transitional council.

We will be working closely with the transitional council and ensuring that our men and women in the armed forces have the tools they need to do the job.

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SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is senseless, reckless, hasty and dangerous. Those are some of the words used to describe the decision to close the rescue communication centre in my riding of St. John's South—Mount Pearl. Experts, unions, the provincial fisheries minister and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have all spoken out against this indefensible move by the Conservative government.

Will the minister listen to the people of my province and reverse this reckless decision?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, the consolidation of the regional dispatch centre into the existing Joint Rescue Coordination Centre will have no negative impact on the current levels of service provided by the Canadian Coast Guard. Safety and response time will not be affected.

This consolidation is due to technological advances and represents a positive change by locating all maritime and air search and rescue coordinations in the same centre working side by side.

● (1450)

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister has his speaking notes down pat.

Where are the government's priorities? It finds billions for fighter jets and corporate tax give-aways but then make cuts that jeopardize the safety of Canadians who work off our shores. We have one of the worst search and rescue response times in the world. We should be improving our services, not cutting them.

Will the minister abandon his rash cuts and implement the Wells inquiry recommendations to improve our rescue response times and save lives?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I see that the member opposite has his questions down pat as well.

The fact is that mariners in distress will continue to be serviced by the same lifeboats, the same inshore rescue boats, the same Coast Guard vehicles and the same aircraft from the same present locations. This will have no impact on safety and is a very positive move.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in response to my colleague from Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine regarding the closure of the search and rescue office in Quebec City, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans said that the Halifax centre would be offering the same services as the Quebec City office.

Can the minister explain how those services could possibly remain the same, without any impact on quality, when just last Friday, some people calling the centre in Halifax were not able to receive adequate, prompt service in French?

[English]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have indicated all along that bilingual services will be available. There will be no change in the service provided. The Canadian Coast Guard will ensure that bilingual capacity will be made available at the consolidated joint rescue centres.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this reminds me of Service Canada in the Atlantic provinces.

Quebeckers want services in French. Since this government cannot even ensure that Canadians can have their cases heard in French in the country's highest court, it should come as no surprise that it cannot guarantee French-language services after it closes the search and rescue offices in Quebec City.

Search and rescue means saving lives. Does this government realize that Canadians did not give it a mandate to endanger people's safety?

[English]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thought I was very clear in my answer to the previous question.

The maritime communities across Canada will continue to be served in both official languages by the Coast Guard ships, the Coast Guard auxiliary and the Canadian Forces aircraft. The Canadian Coast Guard will ensure that bilingual capacity exists at all of the joint rescue coordination centres.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government submitted a bogus report to the United Nations claiming that it was reducing greenhouse gas emissions by up to 40 megatonnes every year.

A few weeks later, the government gave Parliament another report stating that reductions were actually 10 times less, or only 4 megatonnes annually.

Why did the government cook the books in its report to the UN?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a gross miscalculation of reality. In fact, the report was accurate. In the year in question, 2009, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions were reduced by 42 megatonnes, which was as result of the economic downturn.

In the separate report to comply with the Kyoto treaty reporting, we also very accurately reported the forecasts and the megatonne emissions.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the report to the UN painted such a rosy picture because the government deliberately left out the oil sands. That is a pretty big omission.

Why did the government deliberately try to mislead the UN?

●(1455)

The Speaker: I would caution the member that the term "deliberately misled" has consistently been found to be unparliamentary.

I see the hon. Minister of the Environment is standing to answer so I will allow him to respond.

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the assumption of the question is absolutely false. We did report, in the document provided to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, precise acknowledgement that in 2009 the oil sands industry contributed precisely 6.5% of Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions.

* * *

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the private sector it would be unthinkable to dismantle the largest and most successful grain marketing company in the world without at

least a comprehensive cost benefit analysis, without impact studies to measure the impact on the Prairie communities and without an assessment of liabilities, like broken contracts for ships that are already on order. Some would say that it would even be foolish.

I do not think the minister of agriculture is a fool by any means, an ideological zealot maybe but not a fool. Would he table these analyses to defend his principles if he so believes—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of quotes that I think the member opposite would be interested in. One is from Kevin Bender of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association. Just recently he said, "...give farmers the freedom to market their wheat and barley crops using whatever sales agent they want".

It is followed by another quote that says, "They have a monopoly. A monopoly has to be regulated or reigned in or it can't be allowed to exist".

Do members know who said that? It was said by the member from Winnipeg Centre.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, obviously, from the minister's answer, he does not have these documents. He has not done even the fundamental research on the impact studies.

Can anyone Imagine legislating a multi-billion dollar corporation out of existence without even doing the basic fundamental research? The only sure outcome of this ideological crusade is taking hundreds of millions of dollars out of the pockets of Prairie grain producers and putting it into the pockets of the shareholders, of the very robber barons who used to gouge them for a century until we created the Canadian Wheat Board.

if the minister has evidence that it is a good deal, why will he not table it here in the House?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the best way is to move past these partisan attacks, get the politics out of this and actually talk about the people involved in the industry.

When he talks about a cost benefit analysis, Phil de Kemp of the Malting Industry of Canada said, "The Malting Industry of Canada would like to extend our support for your government's announced plans to begin the legislative process to allow for the marketing choice of barley via the removal of the monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board".

The Malting Industry is saying that it will enjoy being able to market its malt barley and actually do it in a more fulsome way.

We know that all of the processing sectors, whether it is a flour mill or a pasta plant, have moved south of the border simply because they cannot do it in Canada. That has to change.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are rightly outraged. Yesterday, the federal court ordered the Minister of Public Safety to review his decision to deny the transfer of Alexie Randhawa to serve his sentence in Canada. This individual was found with 107 kilograms of cocaine in his vehicle, probably destined for North American youth.

Would the Minister of Public Safety please tell the House what our Conservative government is doing to ensure that dangerous criminals who are serving their sentence in the country where they committed their crimes are not sent to Canada?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot comment on any individual case. However, it is important to be very clear. Canadians who commit crimes abroad run the risk of facing justice abroad. Our government tabled legislation in the last Parliament to ensure that Canadians are kept safe from international offenders. Shockingly, the NDP voted to gut the bill, even going so far as to attempt to remove every reference to "protecting victims".

Law-abiding Canadians can be reassured that we will reintroduce this legislation as soon as possible and, unlike the NDP, we will put the rights of victims ahead of criminals.

* * *

● (1500)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a disturbing pattern of the government abandoning Canadians in difficulty abroad.

Henk Tepper, a New Brunswick potato farmer, has been in a Lebanese prison for almost three months following a commercial dispute. Mr. Tepper's wife and young children say that they have heard nothing but dead air from this government. They have received no information.

It is unacceptable for the government to abandon Canadians in circumstances as difficult as Mr. Tepper's. When will the government intervene with Lebanese authorities, have Mr. Tepper released from the prison in Lebanon and brought back to Canada?

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his courtesy in letting me know he would be raising this issue. I also thank him for the opportunity to set the record straight.

In fact, Mr. Tepper and his family have been given substantial, vigorous and active assistance since the time he was arrested. There have been regular visits and there has been regular contact with Mr. Tepper, his family and his lawyers to give all possible assistance.

* * *

*[Translation]***SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE**

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in order to allow young people in Lavaltrie to play sports and the secondary school to develop a sports education program, the town needs a sports complex. The Conservatives told us that the regions were their priority. Regional development is also my priority.

Will the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities agree to review the request for funding for this project, which will help the economic and social development of Lavaltrie and the surrounding area?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome the hon. member.

The Government of Canada is always very interested in every region of the country and, of course, every region of Quebec. It is a region I know very well, having played a lot of sports there myself. However, as the hon. member knows, the province of Quebec has to give priority to each infrastructure project in the province of Quebec. If the province gives priority to this specific project, then we will see what happens at the federal level. We will be pleased to help this beautiful region.

* * *

*[English]***AIR CANADA**

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, late last night 3,800 Air Canada customer service and ticket agents went on strike. Canadians are worried about the effect this will have on our economy.

Could the Minister of Labour please advise the House of the government's intentions to respond to this strike?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my hon. colleague from the great fortress of Conservative Toronto.

As the member indicated, we are concerned by the effect this strike will have on our economic recovery, which is still fragile, and on Canadians in general. Canadians gave us a strong mandate to complete our economic recovery. That is why we will put on notice tonight legislation to ensure continuing air service for passengers.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is something the Conservatives never talk about in their budget. Since they took power, a 30% increase in food bank use in the country has been rising and 904,000 Canadians used a food bank last year. What is most despicable is that over 200 veterans, a fourfold increase, in the city of Calgary, where the Prime Minister comes from, use a food bank strictly for veterans.

How can the government brag about its budget when the heroes of our country have to go begging for food in the richest city in our country?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to wish the member well in his position. I appreciate his concern for our veterans.

One veteran in the street is one veteran too many. That is why this government, under the leadership of this Prime Minister, has undertaken the largest initiative to help our homeless veterans in three cities: Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. That is why we have been helping more than 100 veterans and why we also are staying the course and ensuring we take care of our veterans all over the country.

* * *

● (1505)

[Translation]

THE SENATE

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since coming to power, the Conservatives have been using the Senate to reward their friends and cronies and often to delay or even defeat bills passed by duly elected MPs. Instead of proposing simply to abolish the Senate, the Prime Minister is instead insisting on a piecemeal, unilateral reform of that institution.

Since the Government of Quebec intends to turn to the courts to block these bills if it is not consulted, will the Prime Minister put an end to this obsession with unilaterally reforming the Senate?

[English]

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we believe the Senate must change in order to reach its full potential as an accountable and democratic institution. As we have always said, we are not interested in opening up the Constitution. Canadians do not want drawn-out constitutional fights. That is why our government will be proceeding with Senate reform that is reasonable and within the authority of Parliament.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

LIBYA

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Speaker: When oral question period began, the period for questions and comments after the speech by the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue was about to begin.

[English]

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the hon. member to the House. It is my understanding that she has served a few years in the Canadian armed forces and I thank her for that service to Canada. I look forward to working with her on the national defence committee when we get organized next week.

In her presentation to the House, she talked about all the horrors that had occurred in Libya because of Colonel Gadhafi. She mentioned all the murders that had taken place and how he had attacked people demonstrating in the streets against his regime. She also talked about Colonel Gadhafi using rape as a weapon against his citizens and about the use of his air force to bomb civilian places.

Government Orders

Does the hon. member believe Colonel Gadhafi should maintain his role as the leader of Libya, or do we need to get him out and replace his government?

● (1510)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. Conservative colleague for the question.

I do not think my opinion really matters. What is important is that the people of Libya decide for themselves what should happen to Colonel Gadhafi. Libyans have the power and the intelligence to decide and to take action to ensure that he no longer leads the country.

It is really up to the people of Libya to take control of their future. It is not up to the Canadian Forces or Canada to ask that. It is up to the people of Libya to decide what they want, and I believe they are intelligent enough to make the decisions needed in order to win back their freedom and regain a comfortable way of life in their own country.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I commend the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue on her very fine speech on this extremely important issue to Canadians. I also note, for the record, that the member has served in the Canadian Forces and, through her knowledge, has been able to give a very detailed presentation of what is going on in Libya from that perspective as well.

Could she also elaborate on another aspect of this motion before us today, and that is a series of amendments that have been put forth by the official opposition? Why does she think it is necessary to have these amendments in order to have a proper resolution, reflecting the will of our party and the will of Canadians?

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the proposed amendments to the motion are important because our Canadian Forces personnel deserve clear answers to their questions. Being in a country at war and being fired upon might naturally lead one to question why we are there. The amendments proposed by the Leader of the Opposition clearly state that the objective is to protect civilians. So there we have one answer to one of our soldiers' questions. They know they are there to protect civilians; that is very clear.

They are also wondering why we are there and exactly what we are doing there. Once again, the amendments proposed by the Leader of the Opposition are very clear: we are there to increase humanitarian aid.

[English]

I will read it in English. It states:

—the House supports an increase in Canada's humanitarian assistance to those affected by the crisis and efforts to strengthen Canada's support for the diplomatic efforts outlined in UNSCR 1973 to reach a ceasefire leading to a Libyan-led political transition, and supports the government's commitment to not deploy Canadian ground troops.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

With that, Canadian soldiers know exactly how things are going to work. Thus, the amendments give two very clear answers to our soldiers, who need to know before being deployed to Libya exactly why they are there and what will happen.

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to participate in the debate on the motion by the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the Canadian role in Libya.

Canada's armed forces are helping protect the civilian population in Libya from violence at the hands of the Gadhafi regime. Our actions in Libya are part of a NATO-led mission authorized by United Nations Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973. The House of Commons unanimously voted for sanctions and to endorse military action. The conditions that prompted these actions still exist.

The Gadhafi regime has continually shown no regard for human rights and has refused to abide by its own international humanitarian and legal obligations. It has chosen to wage war against its own people, including alleged acts of sexual violence and the use of rape as a weapon of war to further the regime's military goals. For that reason, it is our Conservative government's position that Canada's role in Libya must continue alongside our NATO partners in the timeframe set out by the alliance, which is the reason we are debating this motion today.

NATO leaders have said that a 90-day extension is currently required to effect change in Libya and we have agreed with that assessment. Canada has and will continue to work closely with its international and regional partners, such as the United Nations, the Arab League, the African Union and NATO, to ensure that peace and security are brought to the people of Libya.

As the minister for the Status of Women and a female member of Parliament in a freely elected House of Commons, I wish to address the serious allegation that the Gadhafi regime is using rape, fear of rape and other forms of sexual violence against the Libyan population.

Given the chaotic situation in western Libya and the stigma attached to reporting rape in Libya, it is difficult to know exactly what is going on at this time, but we are learning more every day. The investigation by the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court indicated on June 8 that the prosecutor has significant evidence that Gadhafi is using rape as a weapon against the Libyan population. The prosecutor, therefore, is considering adding rape to the serious charges against Gadhafi and his relatives.

We have all heard reports on the case of Ms. Imam al-Obeidi, who was abducted and subsequently detained while attempting to tell a group of foreign journalists in March that she had been tortured and gang raped by 15 members of Gadhafi's forces. Allegations of attacks such as those against Ms. al-Obeidi must be investigated. Torture and the widespread and systematic use of rape against the population are not only serious violations of international law but are abhorrent and unacceptable.

I would like to focus the rest of my comments on the broader perspective for women and girls.

The specific experience of women and girls in armed conflict is often linked to their status in society. We know that when women and girls thrive, the whole of society benefits. So empowering women and girls can help to promote peace and progress for all.

The use of sexual violence as a tool of war devastates societies in ways that few weapons can. It ravages families and communities. It is wrong, it is immoral, it is abhorrent. In these contexts, sexual violence can be a war crime or a crime against humanity.

Countries around the world came together at the 1995 the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and agreed that, "While entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict and terrorism, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society as well as their sex".

Where violence and discrimination against women and girls exist prior to conflict, they get worse during conflict. That is why our government is taking action. Today in Rome, the Minister of International Cooperation announced, among other measures, help for up to 50,000 women and girls in Libya who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing gender-based violence.

We must work to promote equality between women and men and ensure that the differential impact of conflict on women and girls is recognized and addressed through every phase of war and peace. To ensure that this happens, it is important that women be included in the peace process and that they be given the training and support they need to participate meaningfully.

In October of 2010, Canada unveiled its action plan on women, peace and security. This national action plan will help us focus and coordinate the implementation of our commitments and will increase the effectiveness of our response to ensure the systematic integration of the concerns and experiences of women and girls in conflict situations.

• (1515)

This principle of equality through all stages of conflict and peace is the key to the development of stable countries built on a foundation of human rights and the rule of law.

Our national action plan will guide the way Canada develops policy and how we select, train and deploy Canadian personnel and ensure they have the right knowledge and guidance for implementing Canadian policies effectively in the field. It will steer Canada's interventions abroad so they encourage the participation of women and girls, promote their rights and advance their equal access to humanitarian and development assistance.

It is in specific debates such as on this motion that national action plans are essential, and I applaud our government for its proactive position on this topic. Canada has a long history of supporting the rights and well-being of women and girls in situations of conflict, as reflected in our ongoing active implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security. We have also taken action through international programming to address sexual violence, to support civil society and to strengthen international criminal justice mechanisms.

Our government understands that work has to be undertaken in a number of areas to advance women's human rights and equality internationally. That is why we are proud that the Prime Minister is leading international efforts to improve the health and save the lives of mothers and children in some of the world's poorest countries by targeting the leading causes of mortality in mothers and children in vulnerable countries. These new initiatives will support comprehensive and integrated approaches to provide much-needed health services for mothers and children.

It was in this spirit that I spearheaded the recent successful all-party House of Commons initiative in the last parliament of Canada to lead a United Nations resolution proclaiming September 22 as an international day of the girl, a resolution supported by all parties of this chamber, recognized as key to advancing equality for girls throughout the world.

Canadians understand that when girls have a solid foundation in life with the best skills and living conditions, they can truly blossom, grow and join in building a stronger world. The international day of the girl will galvanize worldwide enthusiasm for these goals, helping to raise global awareness of the unique challenges facing girls, as well as their tremendous potential.

"Girls' Rights Matter" was Canada's theme for International Women's Week this year, because we know that when girls know their rights, they are more likely to exercise them in ways that will benefit themselves, their families and their communities.

The promotion of human rights and the equality of women and men, boys and girls, will continue to be important priorities of Canada's foreign and aid policies. It is based on a belief that equal rights for women and girls are an essential and inherent component of progress on overall human rights and democratic development, and that sustainable and equitable development will only be achieved if women are able to participate as equal partners and decision-makers in the sustainable development of their societies.

Consequently, Canada has continuously promoted the integration and mainstreaming of gender analysis in the work of all international fora, including such multilateral organizations as the United Nations, the OECD, the Commonwealth, La francophonie and the OAS.

Canada has played a key role in bringing issues such as violence against women, women's rights as human rights, and national machinery for the advancement of women, and women in decision-making to the forefront of international discussion.

We have condemned the stoning of women in Afghanistan, spoken out against honour-motivated violence and condemned all forms of violence against women and girls worldwide.

Government Orders

Our government is also committed to addressing violence against women and girls in Canada. As members know, in the recent Speech from the Throne, we committed to taking action to address the problem of violence against women and girls.

Our government has no more fundamental duty than to protect the personal safety of our citizens. It takes this responsibility very seriously. We will continue to protect the most vulnerable in society and work to prevent crime. Violence against women affects us all. It destroys families, and weakens the fabric of our society.

I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to ensuring fair, equitable and respectful treatment of all citizens, and to taking further action against acts of violence against women and girls at home and around the world.

• (1520)

Over the last year I have met with women and girls from around the world. I have heard their struggles to access education and to live free from hunger, disease and violence.

We must be vigilant and stand steadfastly to ensure that women have the respect and dignity they are entitled to as human beings.

• (1525)

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for her speech. I agree with most of what she had to say, especially in regard to the totally wanton, disgusting violence committed by Gadhafi's troops against women and girls in Libya.

[English]

We all know that the UN mandated NATO-led mission has three objectives: an end to all attacks against civilians, verifiable withdrawal of the regime's military and paramilitary forces to bases, and full and unhindered access to humanitarian aid for all of those who need it across Libya.

The NDP's position is clear. We support the clear UN mandate to protect civilians in Libya from government attacks and to negotiate a ceasefire. However, we have concerns about mission creep and want to see the government do more on the diplomatic and humanitarian assistance fronts.

Can the minister address those concerns about the mission?

Government Orders

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, I think all members appreciate that while our men and women in uniform are doing very difficult work in Libya, our civilians and public servants and diplomats will be doing just as difficult work post-conflict in Libya. That is why it is important to highlight something as crucial as the announcement by the Minister of International Cooperation today. As we know, she announced additional emergency assistance for up to 780,000 affected people in Libya, as well as those who have fled to neighbouring Tunisia and Egypt and, very importantly, help for up to 50,000 women and girls in Libya who have experienced or at risk of experiencing gender-based violence. Canada has already provided, in response, food for 1 million displaced Libyans, tents and supplies for 90,000 Libyans, as well as medical supplies and care.

We continue to work with our international partners to monitor the humanitarian situation as it develops. Of course, I agree with the member opposite that the humanitarian side of this conflict is one that we will all continue to watch with extreme concern, particularly the impact on women and girls.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I commend the minister for her work on the advancement of equality. The stories of rape as an instrument of war are troubling to us all.

I think the one item that is of the greatest concern to Canadians is the one that was actually identified in the last question, that of mission creep. When we hear of these atrocities, it strikes me that it will be most difficult to eliminate them within the present mandate and I wonder if it is not regime change that we are really talking about here.

Is it realistic to expect to put an end to these atrocities within the UN mandate or is this really about something bigger?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, I think it is realistic to recognize that these horrific acts of violence are occurring. I think it is important that we have raised this issue in the motion and are debating it in the House of Commons and that it has been raised at the highest levels.

In past conflicts, issues like the use of rape as a tool of war were ignored and not recognized by some countries. Canada is taking a leadership role in this matter, as we have done in the past.

As the members know, we have continued to support the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 that was adopted in the year 2000. It was a very important resolution to ensure that violence against women and girls is considered unquestionably as unacceptable, and we will continue through this resolution to support and implement meaningful measures such as the action plan the Minister of Foreign Affairs put in place in October. This is to ensure not only that we improve the safety and justice for women and girls around the world who are affected by violence during conflict but also after conflict. We also have to ensure that women are part of the peace-making process once this conflict is over.

● (1530)

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for her contribution to the debate today and all members for this important debate on Libya.

As members know, we have heard discussion of how Canada responded quickly by moving to Malta when we had to evacuate citizens out of the conflict zone. We moved quickly to help protect Libyan citizens. We have forces there now, on the water, and our air force is working out of Italy to help take out Libyan forces that are attacking their own civilians.

The minister focused her remarks on humanitarian aid. I understand that over \$8 million in aid has already gone into the area and another \$2 million was announced just recently. The minister was talking about the serious issue related to violence against women in the conflict zone.

I understand that of the aid that was recently announced, tens of thousands of dollars would be going toward the victims of rape and sexual violence. There is aid available to train people to help provide counselling and so on.

Could the minister tell us how the money that has been provided is going to assist people at risk from the outrageous acts against women in the conflict zone?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, Canada is taking a leadership role in this matter. It is important that all countries act in the same manner. I am very proud that Canada has recognized not only these despicable actions but has acted very quickly to offer emergency assistance to these victims.

Today, the Minister of International Cooperation has announced additional assistance that will help up to 50,000 women and girls in Libya who have either already experienced or are at risk of experiencing sexual violence. We can only imagine the horror as this conflict unfolds, and the fear that women and girls are experiencing.

Sending a message like this from a free, democratic and just country like Canada to the people of Libya is an important message. We want the women in Libya to know that Canada stands behind them and we will do what we can to support them in this very difficult time.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the minister for her comments, particularly around UN resolutions 1325 and 1888. In fact, on this side of the House we did commend the government for its action plan on resolution 1325. We believe that is something that should be front and centre in Canada's role in the world.

Is the minister part of a co-ordinating group in her role for Status of Women to ensure that this is an action plan that will be further resourced? Clearly, this action plan needs to be animated. The Department of Foreign Affairs did an excellent job in briefing members when they asked for the action plan. Are there further plans to ensure that this action plan will be continuing?

It is not just a one-off, if you will, when it comes to Libya. It is enacted not only overseas but here in Canada as well.

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member and I thank his party for supporting our government's action plan to support resolution 1325.

The action plan responded to a series of United Nations Security Council resolutions on the subject of women, peace and security. Together these resolutions confirm the need to account for equality between women and men in all stages of conflict, prevention and resolution.

I can assure the member that this action plan is very much alive and ongoing. As we speak, our action plan guides the way that Canada develops our policy. It helps us select, train and deploy Canadian personnel. It ensures that we have the right knowledge and guidance for implementing Canadian policies effectively in the field. I know that it will steer our interventions abroad, so that they encourage the participation of women and girls, promote their rights and advance their equal access to humanitarian and development assistance.

We will continue to be guided by this resolution and I thank the member for his support of our action plan.

• (1535)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to speak in the House today on this important motion.

Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with a very distinguished member of the House, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

[Translation]

I would like to start by thanking the voters of Beauséjour, New Brunswick. This is the first opportunity I have had to take the floor in the new Parliament. It is the fifth time that the voters of Beauséjour have placed their confidence in me, and I would therefore like to thank them very much and say I will serve them to the best of my ability for the next four years.

I would also like to tell the House, as my colleagues from Cape Breton—Canso and Toronto Centre did before me, that we will support the motion brought forward by the government and amended by the NDP, with an amendment to the amendment from my colleague from Toronto Centre.

[English]

It is important also to note that this action in Libya, where Canadian Forces are participating in a robust and important way, has been authorized by the United Nations. Colleagues in previous comments have referred to the two specific resolutions, resolutions 1970 and 1973, which have authorized military action in support of protecting civilians, ensuring that aid is able to reach those affected by this devastating crisis, and to ensure that the regime of Colonel Gadhafi is not able to use aircraft or helicopter gunships, or other heavy weapons to attack Libya's unarmed civilian population.

[Translation]

Last March 17, the United Nations imposed a no-fly zone over Libya by adopting resolution 1973.

The Parliament of Canada approved Canadian participation on March 21. Our participation was unanimously approved by Parliament before the last federal election.

NATO has decided now to extend the mission until September 22, 2011.

Government Orders

[English]

It is also important to indicate our party's support, and my colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood will elaborate on that in his incisive comments in a few minutes, for the men and women of the Canadian Forces, who are doing, as they always do, a terrific job in very difficult circumstances.

From a foreign policy perspective, the member for Toronto Centre correctly articulated the Liberal Party's view that we should broaden Canada's role not only in Libya but in other struggling democracies in that region.

I thought the Minister of Foreign Affairs in his comments, that began this debate today, was correct to recognize in a formal way the Libyan national transitional council, and its important work not only in Benghazi, but in attempting to build democratic and state institutions that will be available to the people of Libya when and if there is a change of government.

Canada, from our perspective, can play a broader role. We certainly supported the government's decision to recognize this representative institution of the people of Libya. But we also applauded and were encouraged by the government's announcement that it will increase humanitarian aid by \$2 million. It is a good beginning.

From our perspective, the focus cannot only be on military action. The effective work of our diplomats, our non-governmental organizations and development agencies, obviously the Canadian International Development Agency, can play a critical role in protecting the people of the great country of Libya. They can also help the people of Libya build the capacity necessary and the institutions necessary to ensure that a fledgling democracy is able to take hold and state institutions develop in a way that can be long-lasting and durable in a part of the world that unfortunately has often seen armed conflict at a time when democracy would have offered such a positive and progressive alternative to those countries.

• (1540)

[Translation]

This morning the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced a \$2 million increase in Canada's humanitarian assistance as well as our official recognition of the Libyan national council as the legitimate representative of the people of Libya. We applaud him for that. We think it is an important start. As I said, Canada has a long tradition of supporting democracies embarking on this stage in the civil life of a country, even though it is often difficult.

[English]

If anybody doubted that we live in an unstable world, the events of this spring in that part of the world, the Middle East, now known as the Arab spring, I think have reminded us of the role that the international community can play.

Government Orders

I think that this House has come together, as we have today, to support not only the work done by the women and men who serve in our armed forces but also the work done by our diplomats, the work done by the very impressive women and men who serve in our Department of Foreign Affairs, who work in the Canadian International Development Agency, and the thousands of others who work in non-governmental organizations.

[*Translation*]

There are also the experts in constitutional law. It is difficult to set up a federal system in areas of the world that have scarcely known anything other than conflict. Political scientists and professors of international law have helped build a democratic future in several countries in Libya's neighbourhood, the Middle East. The government should continue to show much greater openness toward efforts of this kind and not just focus on our military contribution, although it is important and authorized by the United Nations. We think that Canada can make a greater, more lasting contribution by supporting these efforts.

[*English*]

I will conclude by saying that the Liberal Party is very proud of the role that Canada has played in developing democratic institutions, and supporting and protecting people facing very serious human rights challenges.

I think all of us were appalled when we saw, in February, some of the savage and brutal attacks inflicted by Colonel Gadhafi's regime on unarmed populations, when we had peaceful protests in countries like Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, when people were expressing their desire to choose their own future, to elect the people who will govern their country, who will rule their country in the spirit of respect for the rule of law, of human rights, and for the rights of women who so often are brutalized by those very regimes that were seeking to put an end to the peaceful protests. When we saw that brutality, I think everybody agreed in this House, and in Canada, as we did in March, that we had a role to play.

We began with a military role. We sent HMCS *Charlottetown*, some air force personnel and some support personnel and, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, we did a great job. I think nobody doubts our contribution militarily.

However, the time has come now for the government, for this House, and I hope for the foreign affairs committee of this House, to look at what additional steps we can take, in terms of governance, capacity-building, respecting the rights of women, and ensuring that the International Criminal Court is able to bring those responsible for these massacres to justice. This was a Canadian invention. We should continue to support multilateral institutions like that in helping the Libyan people on their path to democracy and freedom.

• (1545)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Liberal Party for his intervention. I look forward to working with him on the foreign affairs committee.

One of the issues that needs to be addressed, of course, is who we work with on the ground. It is important to look to the national transitional council, the NTC, and that has been brought up in an

amendment today, because we need to have partners to work with in the days and months ahead.

I just want to get a read from him on the importance of actually having a connection to deal with the governance question. We had presented an amendment today to ensure that there was support for that. However, does the member see this as something that we have to continue to push for, not just in this debate today and the next couple of months but actually something we have to commit to for the next couple of years, in fact?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I also look forward to working with the member and our colleagues on the foreign affairs committee. I am encouraged that our first meeting will be this week. My hope is that the committee can work on exactly that issue. The member for Ottawa Centre has said it very well. Increasing governance assistance, capacity building, a democratic institution and a building assistance require a reliable partner.

There has been a lot of confusion about the nomenclature of the National Transitional Council. Often when we are translating from a different language, the names get confusing. From our perspective, this is a good start. The government's decision to recognize that council today and engage in direct and, we hope, robust talks with its members will be important.

However, I agree with the member that this is not something that can end in September. That level of assistance and that principle should extend for many more months if we are to do the job properly.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a lot of discussion today has been around a post-Gadhafi regime and there is no absolute assurance that there will be a post-Gadhafi regime.

Has he actually turned his thinking as to what would be the consequence of being unable to remove, isolate or eliminate Gadhafi in any kind of way, so the situation could possibly be that three months from now we would still talking about the same thing?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood identifies one of the fundamental difficulties in this discussion. While the United Nations resolution does not authorize or encourage regime change, it is increasingly clear, and I think foreign ministers from G8 countries and others have recognized this, that the continuation of a dictator as brutal and as clearly disrespectful of human rights as Colonel Gadhafi is not something that can be contemplated if we are to succeed in achieving the kind of change we need in Libya.

However, I would make it clear that Gadhafi has been indicted now by the International Criminal Court, so the idea now that he could somehow go into retirement in some other country is not an option. He needs to face the consequences for the brutal and horrible acts he has perpetrated on innocent civilians and women in his country. Within the respect of the rule of law, we have to do what we can to ensure Gadhafi faces consequences for those horrible acts he has perpetrated on innocent civilians.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated my colleague's speech.

I am worried about seeing the mission expand without any real parameters. Everyone here is stressing the importance of diplomacy and humanitarian aid. Does the hon. member for Beauséjour believe that the motion, as it stands, sufficiently covers the two aspects of diplomacy and humanitarian aid?

• (1550)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Gatineau for her very pertinent question.

I share her concerns. I think the motion recognizes the importance of a balanced commitment, but I hope that, with the members of her party and others on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, we will be able to ensure that development and diplomacy remain just as important as military attacks.

[English]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak in this important debate.

It seems like there is a great deal of consensus in the House with respect to moving forward for the next three and a half months. I am pleased to see the government has responded positively to both the NDP and the Liberal amendments.

I hope at the end of the next three and a half months the facts on the ground will have changed and Libyans can contemplate a better life than what they have been subject to for the last number of months. Let us hope, for all of us, but especially for the Libyans, that we are not back debating this again three and a half months from now with a similar egregious situation in Libya.

I would like to note that there is an extreme reluctance by Canadians to be engaged in yet another conflict. I think that is pretty clear from a lot of conversations we had during the election, that we had done our bit in Afghanistan and they did not want to be involved in other conflicts. The real question here is this. What is the exit strategy and what is the end game?

The question I pose in the course of my remarks is, what now? I want to frame this as a critique rather than a criticism of the government. Certainly no critique is necessarily a criticism, but the critique is based upon the doctrine of the responsibility to protect.

It is quite easy to get into these missions. It is far more difficult to get out. Ironically, the very success of the military mission to date raises the very question of, what now? A well thought out responsibility to protect might well be something of a road map, more than we have heard from to date.

Mr. Gadhafi is trapped and barring some Houdini-like exercise, this will be the end of his tyrannical regime. What now? What are the initiatives the government has taken, or will take, in order to return Libya to some level of stability? Will Canada be involved in aid or for governance issues? If so, how? What is our level of contact with the Benghazi council? Who is spearheading these contacts? What do we hope to achieve?

Government Orders

The military mission has been brilliant and its success to date is in no small measure due to the men and women who honour us greatly by wearing the Canadian uniform and, indeed, as well to Lieutenant-General Bouchard's performance as the NATO commander. The "now what" question is still top of mind for many Canadians and hence the amendment put forward by the member for Toronto Centre, which I hope will enjoy the support of the House.

The genesis of the responsibility to protect is the phrase, "never again". We have, in our lifetime, seen genocide perpetrated on host populations. Rwanda comes to mind immediately. We have seen the Holocaust in Germany. We have seen what was happening in Serbia. The international community came together and said, "never again".

At the core of the international community's responsibility is to take timely and decisive actions where the state has manifestly failed to protect its population, and clearly those were the facts on the ground in Libya when we decided to pass the motion: that is the no-fly zone, the arms embargo, targeted sanctions, humanitarian assistance, et cetera. These can all play a very effective role in the short term. However, as all armed conflicts do come to an end, the real question is, okay, what now? What measures need to be taken?

I was particularly struck by an article by the World Federalist Movement dated yesterday, which set out a number of points to be considered by this Parliament, and I thought it was quite useful to talk about those.

The first issue was ambiguous goals. We seem to be moving from protecting civilians to eliminating Mr. Gadhafi. That is known as mission creep and contains its own seeds of destruction. We need to be extraordinarily careful about that kind of issue.

• (1555)

With respect to potential oversight, clearly NATO is best suited to do the military operation, but it lacks a mandate and possibly the ability to conduct a multi-faceted political strategy. Canada could actually be useful if it chooses to do so, and it would be interesting to hear from the government as to how it does wish to be involved in a multi-faceted political strategy.

As to strategy on the fly, bombing is not a strategy. It is wishful thinking to think that Mr. Gadhafi will be taken out by a lucky bomb or will run out of money, or ammunition or fuel. Canada should be promoting a de-escalation of the conflict and facilitating the rebuilding process once the conflict ends.

With respect to the disproportionate use of force, in my view, NATO has been very studious in its application of force and it has adhered slavishly, in my judgment, to the responsibility to protect doctrine, and its intervention is largely justified and consistent with that doctrine to date.

Government Orders

Although the Liberal Party continues to support the implementation of resolutions 1970 and 1973, we, like most Canadians, want to see a clear road map which addresses the questions we have been asking. The road map must include not only the military goals, but also diplomatic, humanitarian and post-conflict goals.

The extension of the mission should not be seen as a free pass. Parliamentarians should be given the opportunity to revisit the mission and discuss the progress being made.

I want to compliment all of my colleagues in the House today. I have sat here for some but not all of the debate and it has been at a very high level and it has been very civilized. In some measure, the government should take note of the quality of debate today as it strives to represent the wishes of Canadians.

When we do revisit this mission in September, there are some benchmarks that should be useful to evaluate our contributions. I would hope, as would everyone here, that we do not have to do this again in September, but the greater likelihood is that we will have to revisit this mission.

The first issue would be civilian protection. Canada should strive to closely adhere to the Security Council's resolution, which tasks NATO with protecting civilian lives. Protecting civilian lives is why Canada is included in the mission and it should remain the top objective.

Second, it should be supporting diplomacy. The mission in Libya will hopefully come to an end sooner rather than later and measures should be in place to transition to democracy. This cannot be done with bombs and embargoes, but rather through genuine political dialogue.

The third is humanitarian relief. The conflict in Libya has created a humanitarian crisis within that country, which left unaddressed would only lead to further conflict. Coordinating food, shelter and medical supplies should be a priority in this conflict-ridden country.

The fourth is the post-conflict peace operations. A discussion over what Canada's role in post-conflict Libya should be should occur and a clear plan be put in place.

The fifth is human rights and international criminal responsibility. Canada should provide the necessary support to enable adherence to human rights norms.

Using these benchmarks will aid in creating a more stable and secure Libya when the conflict has ended.

My party will be supporting the amended resolution, but I suggest that civil protection, supporting diplomacy, human rights and international criminal responsibility should be the benchmarks to measure our success, and this may well then turn out to be a successful R2P, responsibility to protect, mission.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to congratulate the member on his appointment as defence critic for the Liberal Party. Having worked with him in the previous Parliament on various bills and initiatives, I know he will do a good job in his new role.

I want to touch on two quick issues and get the member's take on them.

The first is the issue of Libyan students who are stranded in Canada and the need to support them. We have not talked about that yet today. We have pushed this issue with the government to ensure that the students who are stranded here get support. There have been some challenges in getting in touch with these students, but we need to ensure there is some flexibility in the sanctions so they can actually get support.

There is also the issue around those refugees who are migrant workers. We have asked that there be support for them as well, because they are in a difficult situation. They are stranded and almost without any opportunity to receive support other than through UN relief.

Could I have the member's take on these two issues?

• (1600)

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I, too, congratulate the member on his re-election and his re-appointment as foreign affairs critic.

There are two questions, one with respect to the students and one with respect to Libyans generally in this country. There is a concern that some are being intimidated, hence, part of our amendment addressed that issue. In the event that there is intimidation or anything else going on with respect to Libyans living in our country, the government should take a proactive role in addressing that.

With respect to the students, if there is a need for support while their support is being cut off from back home, the government needs to address that as well. It may be that there are specific instances where the Minister of Immigration needs to address that issue.

With respect to migrants, I have seen the television images and they are in an extraordinarily difficult situation and they do need relief.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Scarborough—Guildwood for his contributions to the discussion today. I know, as a long-serving member of the House, his opinions are appreciated around here. However, I do find a little inconsistency in some of his remarks that I wanted to draw to his attention and ask him about.

He mentioned in his remarks that bombing is not a strategy. He called it perhaps wishful thinking that we might actually take out Mr. Gadhafi with a lucky strike. Of course, the focus of the mission is not for a regime change but for the valued role that our forces are playing in protecting civilians.

The member went on to say that protecting civilians should be the focus of the mission. I would ask the member to reflect on the valued role of our armed forces in responding to the no fly zone, in helping to take out the armed forces that were headed to Benghazi and that mined the harbour in Misrata. Our armed forces are out there clearing the harbour so relief can get into Misrata and also taking away the capacity of Mr. Gadhafi's regime to harm his own citizens.

I would ask him to perhaps reflect on the importance of the role of our Canadian armed forces.

Government Orders

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I thought I did reflect in my speech on the role of our armed forces, which I thought has been absolutely brilliant, as has been the work of Lieutenant-General Bouchard. However, I do not think that is the point. Maybe I was not clear enough but possibly the hon. member did not understand what I was directing my concern to.

Bombing is not a strategy. Bombing is a tactic. The overall goal of the mission is protection of civilians. If we could do it without bombing, that would be good. That would be the strategy. Our various tactics are embargos, humanitarian relief and, indeed, bombing. When I say that bombing is not a strategy but a tactic, hopefully that will clarify the confusion in the hon. member's mind. We are not there to bomb anybody into oblivion. We want the Libyan people to be successful and prosperous.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is the first time on my feet in the 41st Parliament, I will take a moment to thank the great people of Edmonton Centre for trusting me for the third time to be their member of Parliament. I, and we, will not let them down.

I also thank my wife Judy, our children, Jennifer and Robb, and our son-in-law, Jeff for their love and support. I give a special thanks to our 15-month old grandson, Tyler, for being such a little trooper on election night and making his grandpa look good, as good as possible anyway.

Finally, none of us would be here without the hard work and dedication of great volunteers. I was certainly blessed with such a group. None of us would be here without people like that, and I thank them all very much.

Before I go on, let me just say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Nanaimo—Alberni.

It is my pleasure to take part in this important debate on Canada's contribution to the NATO campaign in Libya. I believe that we can all be proud that Canada is at the forefront of an international response to the crises in Libya.

The leadership that Canada continues to demonstrate on the international stage is truly impressive. Increasingly we are positioning ourselves as a go-to country, a country ever more committed to defending human rights and democratic values, a country ever more committed to standing shoulder to shoulder with its allies and partners and a country with the capacity to act.

For three months, Canada has been making critical whole of government contributions to the enforcement of United Nations Security Council resolution 1973. We are helping the international community protect Libyan civilians under threat of attack by a brutal regime. We are effectively enforcing the arms embargo and a no-fly zone over Libya.

The Canadian Forces have been a key component of Canada's engagement in Libya. Operation Mobile is the latest example of our military's ability to respond quickly and effectively to crises and unfolding events around the world. When called upon in reaction to the events in Libya, the Canadian Forces showed impressive readiness.

Within one day of being tasked by the Prime Minister, our navy was able to equip, configure and deploy HMCS *Charlottetown* to the Mediterranean, complete with an embarked CH-124 Sea King.

Our air force was equally professional in its response to the Canadian decision to participate in the enforcement of UN Security Council resolution 1973. It took mere hours for the men and women of 3 Wing Bagotville to prepare highly complex CF-18 fighter aircraft for deployment overseas, a deployment to a mission almost 7,000 kilometres away. Our CF-18s are providing a vital capability to the NATO-led efforts in Libya, a capability that is necessary for the success of the alliance's campaign.

In addition, our air force is contributing two CP-140 Auroras. These patrol aircraft are conducting critical surveillance and reconnaissance missions along the Libyan coast and are providing precious information to the coalition. The air force has also deployed one CC-150T Polaris and two CC-130T Hercules to Operation Mobile to conduct refueling operations. They provide millions of litres of fuel to both Canadian and allied aircraft.

Canada's military operations in Libya demonstrate an enduring and proven truth, that the men and women who make up our Canadian armed forces are dedicated, professional and always ready to defend Canada and Canadian interests.

The government has made it a core priority to deliver the capabilities that our soldiers, sailors and air personnel need to provide this excellent service. For the Canadian Forces to have the ability to act quickly and effectively, they must be well equipped and the members well trained and motivated at all times.

Canadians expect our military to be able to provide a unique capability. They expect our military to be ready to respond to crisis situations, either at home or around the world, with the necessary personnel, equipment and expertise.

This is why the Canadian government introduced the Canada first defence strategy in 2008. The Canada first defence strategy is a solid plan to modernize our military. It is a plan to make the right investments in the right mix of capabilities. It is our investment in the strategy that allows the level of readiness we have seen in the Canadian Forces response to the crisis in Libya. It is our investment in our Canadian Forces that enables a timely deployment of our assets where they are needed, whether at home or abroad.

By continuing to implement the Canada first defence strategy, we will ensure that the Canadian Forces can continue to demonstrate leadership abroad, that Canada continues to be a reliable ally and that we can continue to assume our duty when crises erupt, as we are doing right now in Libya.

We have already achieved great progress in the delivery of the Canada first defence strategy with solid investments across the four pillars that underpin military capabilities: equipment, infrastructure, personnel and readiness.

Government Orders

Over the past years, the government has invested in defence infrastructure development and renewal, new hangars, runways, housing units and medical facilities that are absolutely critical to the functioning of a modern military. Our men and women in uniform need the proper installations for research, development, training and maintenance of equipment.

• (1605)

We will continue to make these necessary investments as we strive toward our objective to replace or refurbish 50% of the existing defence infrastructure over a 20-year period. That is an awful lot of infrastructure.

At the same time, we are also investing in the Canadian Forces' most important asset: our people. We are fortunate to have such a highly dedicated and professional force. We ask much of our men and women in uniform and we have a responsibility to provide them with the necessary support.

We have taken many new measures to enhance care and support for serving members. For example, this winter the Minister of National Defence announced the launch of phase three of the Joint Personnel Support Unit with the opening of five new integrated personnel support centres. These centres provide a one-stop service for ill and injured Canadian Forces personnel, former personnel, their families and families of the deceased.

Last fall, the minister also announced new measures to address some of the needs of the Canadian Forces personnel who have suffered serious injuries in Afghanistan. These measures, amounting to \$52.5 million over five years, will help us honour the sailors, soldiers and air personnel who have sacrificed so much for our country by establishing a legacy of care. We are also investing \$140 million in a health information system that will help improve the care available to service personnel who need it.

Importantly, the government is also delivering on its commitment to renew core equipment capabilities of the Canadian Forces. In July 2009, the government announced that it would purchase new and upgraded existing land combat vehicles for the army. Replacing and upgrading these vehicles is essential to maintain the Canadian Forces' ability to effectively and successfully conduct the missions we ask them to undertake.

In renewing core capabilities, we also take advantage of emerging technologies that can further reduce the risks to our soldiers by offering them a higher level of protection. The upgrading of the light armoured vehicle III, as well as the acquisition of the tactical armoured patrol vehicle, the close combat vehicle and other vehicles improving force mobility are proceeding as planned.

We are pursuing a national shipbuilding procurement strategy under which the new joint support ships and Arctic offshore patrol ships will be built. We will also launch the definition phase for the Canadian surface combatant project, which will renew the navy's surface fleet by replacing our destroyers and frigates. These ships are essential to ensuring that the navy can continue to monitor and defend Canadian waters and make significant contributions to international naval operations.

We are also making great strides with the renewal of Canadian Forces' aerospace capabilities. We started to take delivery of our new

fleet of CC-130J Hercules transport aircraft last year. The new aircraft is already a key contributor to military operations both at home and abroad. We are acquiring 15 F model Chinook helicopters, an aircraft that will become a crucial asset serving across the spectrum of Canadian Forces' operations.

Last year, we took delivery of the final updated CF-18 fighter aircraft, ensuring the extension of the fighter's life until the 2020 timeframe. The CF-18 modernization was essential to sustain the Canadian Forces' modern and interoperable fighter fleet.

To maintain our fighter capability beyond the 2020 timeframe, we will acquire our next generation fighter aircraft, the F-35 Lightning II. This will enable the air force to continue to operate effectively in the evolving security environment of the 21st century until well past 2050. Canada requires a fighter capability to defend the sovereignty of Canadian airspace, to remain a strong and reliable partner in the defence of North America through Norad and to ensure interoperability with key allies as part of international operations.

The current operations in Libya are the clearest demonstration of the need for a strong fighter capability, a fighter capability that allows the Canadian Forces to operate alongside our allies in NATO operations and a fighter capability that allows our military to continue to be a leader on the world stage.

The Canadian Forces are well equipped and well trained to make important contributions to the international efforts such as those in Libya. The government will continue to make the necessary investments in our military's capabilities in accordance with the tenets of the Canada first defence strategy. We will ensure that our men and women in uniform can continue to help build international peace and security like they are doing in Libya as we speak.

Sustaining our participation in NATO's operations will continue to demonstrate Canada's leadership, our commitment to NATO and our reliability as an ally and partner. I encourage parliamentarians to support the extension of the Canadian Forces' Operation Mobile and I am pleased to hear the general support I have heard today in Parliament.

• (1610)

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my esteemed colleague on his re-election.

I was happy to hear a lot of references in his speech to veterans. I was on the Hill last November when there was a big support action led by the ex-ombudsmen, Pat Stogran and Mike Blais. They had made some very strong demands of the government to help veterans. We often think of veterans as being in World War I, World War II and so on, but many veterans come back from some of our missions like Afghanistan and likely after Libya.

What I did not hear much about in my esteemed colleague's speech was a reference to more diplomatic and humanitarian assistance. Is he satisfied with just the military mission?

• (1615)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague to the House.

Clearly, any mission like this, just like Afghanistan, is not a military-only solution. I was dealing more with the aspects of the Canadian Forces, but certainly it is a whole of government approach. I did mention that.

Part of the long-term solution in Libya, just like in Afghanistan, will come from the Libyan people themselves. Ultimately, they will decide the future of their country. We will be there to assist, along with the United Nations, the African Union, the Arab League, and other organizations that will form part of helping them to transition to whatever comes after the Gadhafi regime. That is certainly part of our government's approach, as it is with all of our allies.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have discussed many times many issues regarding national defence, I hope with the zeal that the member spoke of the firefighters he will bring an equal amount of zeal to the issue of search and rescue in the near future.

I want to ask the member about the responsibility to protect, which was the issue that was brought up through the United Nations and how it has become a model around the world. How does he see our responsibility to protect, as a nation of nations involved in this initiative, is to unfold over the next three and a half months?

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, clearly, the responsibility to protect has special meaning for countries like Canada. We are one of the relatively few nations in the world that has the capacity to act in these situations and we have the history of being willing to do that, the history of being willing to stand up and fight for others, whether it is World War I, World War II, Korea, Afghanistan, peacekeeping, now Libya, whatever that is. It does have special meaning to Canada. That is something we will always pride ourselves on, being willing to do that.

It is an important practice, it is an important philosophy to maintain, that we as a country have to be willing to stand up even though sacrifice is involved. If it is important enough to do, then we should be prepared to do it. Because if we do not, who will?

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment my colleague on his speech. As has been mentioned in the discussion today, we are talking about the whole of government response and the member for Edmonton Centre has focused more on the military aspects.

Being a former member of our armed forces and a CF-18 pilot and former parliamentary secretary to the minister of defence, I know he is well-informed on these issues.

I want to ask him particularly, though, about the role of the integration of our forces, how they are working together with our international partners, how for example the *Charlottetown* picks up on radar missiles being fired. We heard some remarks from the minister of defence, that it calls into our NATO command centres and then they send out our Canadian Forces from Italy which

manage to take out the weapons in Libya that are being used to attack civilian forces.

I wonder if he would care to comment on that and the roles of the HMCS *Charlottetown* and the CF planes, as well?

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the technical fighter pilot question.

The *Charlottetown*, the CF-18s, the Auroras, and the tankers are all part of a very complex operation. It is what we are equipped for. It is what we have trained for within the Canadian Forces. It is what we have trained for with our allies at places like Cold Lake during Operation Maple Flag and various training scenarios like that around the world. Now, of necessity, we have gained a lot of operational experience in actual operations where the training and the equipment has really come to the fore and shown that Canada does not have to take a backseat to anybody when it comes to the quality of our forces and the quality of the job that we can do for people around the world.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to participate in the debate this afternoon and appreciate members who have taken part in the debate from all sides of the House as we discuss this very important mission to help the people of Libya.

I will state at the outset that the Libyan crisis is deeply concerning to Canada, specifically the plight of hundreds of thousands of people who are trapped in the conflict areas or have had to seek safety by fleeing to Egypt, Tunisia and surrounding countries.

The unbelievable images and heartbreaking stories emerging from Libya remind us in raw and stunning detail that our contributions are necessary. They are vital as the international community seeks to bring at least some semblance of stability to this volatile part of the world.

Canada acted swiftly in the days after the crisis began by immediately committing up to \$5 million in humanitarian assistance to help meet the most urgent needs of those affected by the crisis. Less than three weeks later, the Prime Minister announced an additional \$3.575 million, bringing the Canadian International Development Agency's overall response to over \$8 million.

The funding has been allocated through CIDA as follows:

The World Food Programme received \$1.5 million to provide emergency food assistance to displaced and conflict-affected populations in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt.

The International Committee of the Red Cross received \$1.35 million to meet the emergency medical needs within Libya and to support Red Cross relief efforts in Tunisia and Egypt as well.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees received \$1.25 million to provide humanitarian support in the form of shelter, non-food items, water and sanitation to people displaced in neighbouring countries.

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The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies received \$250,000 to provide migrants displaced into Tunisia and Egypt with humanitarian relief such as food and non-food items and medical support.

Our own Canadian Red Cross Society received \$75,000 to transport humanitarian relief supplies from stockpiles in Dubai and Tunisia.

The International Organization for Migration received a further \$3.575 million to support repatriation efforts for migrants displaced into neighbouring countries by the fighting in Libya, helping them return to their countries of origin.

Additionally, the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force provided more than \$600,000 for the purchase of essential security equipment to enhance the safety of UN humanitarian personnel.

These contributions have been vital, even more so in the wake of disturbing allegations that have recently come to light. We have learned that rape and sexual violence are allegedly being used as weapons of war against the civilian population in Libya.

The United Nations Human Rights Council has established an International Commission of Inquiry to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights law in Libya, including allegations of sexual violence. Although the commission has not yet completed its investigations, it recently noted that it has received sufficient information to justify further investigation to determine the extent of these terrible crimes, including whether they were incited by command forces on either side of the conflict.

United Nations agencies are working closely with their partners inside Libya and in Tunisia near the Libyan border to help the victims of these despicable crimes. On the Tunisian border the group is providing post-rape medical kits to health facilities and service providers, training them to clinically manage rape and ethical issues related to treatment and reporting, providing survivors with psychological support and raising awareness of rape issues within communities.

We take these allegations of rape and sexual violence seriously. We are doing what we can to support our partners in their efforts to bring care to those who have suffered abuse. In fact, just today the Minister of International Cooperation announced an additional \$2 million to help those affected by fighting in Libya.

CIDA is providing \$1.75 million to the International Red Cross and \$250,000 to the UN Population Fund, UNFPA. The money will help the UN Population Fund protect women and girls from rape and sexual violence, as well as help to provide critical care to the survivors of such shameful abuse.

• (1620)

This new funding brings Canada's combined humanitarian assistance contributions in Libya to \$10.6 million.

CIDA humanitarian funding provides support to organizations like the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross, enabling them to respond when necessary to specific aspects of crisis, including providing support to victims of gender-based violence.

[Translation]

The situation in Libya is volatile at best. Thousands of people remain in need of ongoing assistance within and beyond Libyan borders. They are desperate for food, water, sanitation, protection services and medical supplies. They need our help, which is why we are proud to support our humanitarian partners within the United Nations and the Red Cross movement. To deliver assistance effectively, humanitarian actors require access to all those affected by the crisis. That is why Canada has called on all parties involved in the Libyan conflict to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.

• (1625)

[English]

As the conflict persists, it remains critical for Canada to keep playing a supporting role in relief efforts. We continue to work closely with our international partners, including United Nations, to monitor the developing humanitarian situation and to provide expertise and assistance in an effort to alleviate the suffering of the victims of this crisis.

Canada's assistance is needed. We are working with our international partners to overcome the horrendous situation and I am pleased to see from the tenor of the debate today that all parties appear to support the extension of our mission in Libya.

What we have heard in the debate today is that we are engaged in an all of government response to the crisis in Libya. I think Canadians can be very proud of the response of our government as the crisis began to unfold; how our nation responded quickly to help with the evacuation of internationals caught in the conflict, working through Malta; and how very quickly as the international community, in alarm, began to see the use of force against Libyan civilians, our own Canadian forces became engaged as part of an international effort sponsored by the United Nations.

The member for Edmonton Centre very eloquently remarked, and I am very impressed and am sure many Canadians would be impressed, that our Canadian forces base in Bagotville was able to get those CF-18s scrambled, equipped and ready to participate in an international mission within just three days and on their way for deployment. Those original six aircraft are now backed up by a seventh CF-18.

I have to say how impressed I am with our military. Many of the members will have the opportunity to participate over the course of the summer in MP familiarization programs. I had the privilege last September to be on board the HMCS *Calgary* out of Esquimalt, while its sister ship, the HMCS *Charlottetown* is over there right now assisting in Libya.

Among the 225 personnel onboard, it was amazing to see the focus, the discipline, the knowledge and the way the teams on board the ship work together to accomplish tasks that none of them could do on their own. The importance of that training is certainly evident as we see the impact of our HMCS *Charlottetown* in the region right now, interacting with some 18 NATO ships that are offshore, how they were also engaged in de-mining the port at Misrata and how they are protecting the coast and the Libyan people by preventing weapons from arriving to support the Gadhafi regime.

We are very proud of the role our air force and all our armed forces personnel are playing. I think all Canadians should feel good about the whole of Canada's effort to make a difference in the lives of Libyans. We all hope this crisis will be resolved quickly so that in a few months' time we will not have to make difficult decisions as we move ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Halifax, The Environment; the hon. member for London—Fanshawe, Seniors.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of International Cooperation announced another \$2 million to go into humanitarian assistance for Libya. It brings to a total of \$10.6 million that Canada has contributed toward humanitarian efforts.

Could the member talk about the success that we have had in working with our international partners, the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, to assist the people of Libya?

• (1630)

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation for the role her department is playing with our international partners.

The first part of the crisis saw many Libyans fleeing the conflict zone crossed into Tunisia on one side or Egypt on the other. To their credit, these countries did their very best to respond and help.

Canada was quick to provide aid in helping to restore people, first, the internationals who were caught in the conflict, by helping with transportation, with aid and temporary shelter and all kinds of needs for the people displaced. It also helped to get supplies to the people of Libya through the Red Cross, the Red Crescent and our international partners to ensure people on the ground who needed water, food and assistance received it. Now people need counselling services, psychological services and aid in how to deal with the crisis of sexual violence.

We are on the job and we are doing our best to meet the needs of the people in difficult circumstances.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary covered it with an excellent question on what we were doing on the humanitarian and support side.

Would my hon. colleague comment on the broader question of the Canada first defence strategy and the importance of maintaining the momentum in that to keep our Canadian Forces equipped to do the kind of tough jobs we ask them to do, such as Libya?

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, this is a matter very close to the hon. member's own heart. It is certainly important for our Canadian armed forces.

We see the tragic losses in our mission in Afghanistan, the Highway of Heroes and the way Canadians have responded to the sacrifice of our armed forces personnel on the front lines. Canadians have come to understand how important it is when we send

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courageous young people, wearing our Canadian uniform and having the flag on their shoulders, to ensure they have the kind of equipment that makes it possible for them to do the job with the least possible risk and the highest probability of success. That means equipping them with new ships to stay current with new technology, as technologies have advanced so quickly.

The Arctic is changing very quickly. We will need patrol vessels up there. We will need new supply ships. We need those submarines and we also need the air force. We need those F-35s.

A young man approached me on the street just as we headed into the election. He had just signed up as a volunteer. He wanted to get into the armed forces. He wanted to be in ground forces of the armed forces, but he wanted to know if we would have those F-35s so if he was on the ground in future in a conflict zone, the air force would be able to protect him and ensure that he came home safely. I pass that along to members.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to be a pilot as well, but I had a problem seeing over the dash, so I was told me, but nonetheless I am with the force in spirit.

I want to ask the hon. member a quick question about the security resolution that was passed, calling for the force upon the infrastructure and other things throughout Libya in the past while. We have seen a lot of that exercised with a great deal of precision, certainly from the professionalism, as exhibited by our own forces, such as those on HMCS *Charlottetown*, which I had the honour to visit a short time ago.

My hon. colleague has quite a bit of knowledge about what is happening on the ground in Libya, and I congratulate him for that. The situation in Benghazi is one thing, but I fear for the situation in and around Tripoli right now and just what the people there are going through. What kind of information are we receiving out of Tripoli as to the state and welfare of the individuals?

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member his concern for our military and the people on the ground in Libya. I wish that question had been directed to the member for Edmonton Centre, because he is much more on top of the current situation on the ground than I am, or to the people on the defence committee, yet our committees have yet to be struck.

I wish I had a detailed answer for his question. The situation on the ground is changing quickly. In co-operation with our international partners, we are doing our very best to protect civilians. He has raised a very legitimate concern. We are all concerned for the people on the ground as the dynamics to and fro with what remains of the Gadhafi forces. We all want to ensure that we do our best to protect those people.

• (1635)

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will share my time with my colleague, the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

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The military operation in Libya is, in a sense, the culmination of the evolution of the United Nations and international law, an evolution in which, I am proud to say, Canada has been involved many times on different levels.

As we know, this is the first time that the responsibility to protect has been invoked and carried out under the United Nations Security Council. Two other countries, Russia and France, have invoked this principle, but only as individual countries, and without the support of other nations.

As I said, this is a first, and Canada has been involved in the evolution towards the responsibility to protect. We should be proud of that.

Initially, we learned of the unacceptable violence and cruelty that Colonel Gadhafi was inflicting on his people from the media, but it is also through the International Criminal Court, more specifically the hard work of its chief prosecutor, that we have learned more about what is going on in the country and have been able to further justify our military involvement in Libya.

[English]

It is through the International Criminal Court and its chief prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, that we have been able to gather detailed evidence, in some cases provided by human rights groups, of Colonel Gadhafi's crimes against his people. In fact, by way of example, I will just read a quote from Mr. Moreno-Ocampo. In a news conference in The Hague a while back, he stated this about Colonel Gadhafi's forces:

His forces attacked Libyan civilians in their homes and in public spaces, shot demonstrators with live ammunition, used heavy weaponry against participants in funeral processions, and placed snipers to kill those leaving mosques after prayers.

I will digress for a moment to talk about the International Criminal Court, the role that Canada played in the establishment, and, more specifically, the role that a Liberal government and a Liberal foreign minister, who is well-known, Lloyd Axworthy, of the International Criminal Court since its work is so important in respect of this mission.

As members know, Canada played a pivotal role in the establishment of the court. It chaired a coalition of states called The Like-Minded Group, that helped to motivate the wider international community to adopt the Rome Statute.

Canada also contributed to the United Nations trust fund that enabled lesser-developed countries to participate in International Criminal Court negotiations.

I would add that it was a senior diplomatic, Philippe Kirsch, who was chosen by acclamation, which is quite an honour, to chair the committee of the whole at the diplomatic conference in Rome that was held in June and July 1998.

As I mentioned, Minister Axworthy was very much behind international support for the court.

It should also be mentioned that Mr. Kirsch was instrumental in drafting the final global proposal for the International Criminal Court.

Canada, under a Liberal government, was the fourteenth country to sign the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

On June 29, 2000, Canada enacted the Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act, becoming the first country in the world to adopt comprehensive legislation implementing the Rome Statute.

Finally, on July 7, 2000, Canada ratified the Rome Statute.

The International Criminal Court has played a significant role in the current developments in Libya, and Canada was very much involved with the court.

That brings me to the responsibility to protect. Here again, former foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy played a very important role, taking initiative from the wisdom and knowledge we had gained as a country, especially in Rwanda.

As members know, Minister Axworthy created a body called the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, an international United Nations group, that was asked to delve into this question of how we would get away from the original idea behind the United Nations, which was created in a cold war climate. The original idea was that we must never intervene in the sovereignty of a sovereign state because that would provoke war. However, in a post-cold war international environment, those considerations are lessened. Also, in a post-cold war international environment, we see that many of the conflicts are civil wars and many of the conflicts involve governments turning on their own people, as Colonel Gadhafi's government has done.

Lloyd Axworthy launched this international effort because he did not believe that in a civilized world we could allow dictators to simply massacre their own people. The problem was it was important that the idea be accepted by more than just a few western countries.

● (1640)

In 2005, the African Union included the concept of the responsibility to protect in its charter. All of a sudden the idea started to gain traction and, in 2006, the UN Security Council agreed to have this doctrine become part of international law.

My main point is that this mission in Libya is very much an extrapolation, if I may, of the role Canada has played in the international community, of the leadership that it has shown.

We need to be careful when we talk about the responsibility to protect R2P because it is still viewed with suspicion by many less developed countries that have a history of colonialism. They see the responsibility to protect as perhaps a pretext that could be used by countries that would want to intervene in unjustifiable circumstances to promote their interests. It could also be used by factions in a civil war situation where an unscrupulous warlord, for example, would provoke a crisis so that he could get some help from outside intervention.

We need to protect Canada's reputation as a peace-loving country, as a non-imperialist country. We need to protect Canada's reputation by being careful in how we participate in these kinds of missions. Canada's reputation is sterling and we have taken many years to build it up.

•(1645)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his speech.

Efforts are currently being made, and a great deal of emphasis is being placed on the military component and the United Nations resolution. However, could we get an update on the efforts currently being made to freeze Gadhafi's assets in the world? What is Canada's involvement in this effort?

Gadhafi is said to have immense wealth: \$104 billion, some of which was invested in Bahrain, Kenya and Zimbabwe, in countries where it is difficult to block these funds.

We know that China and Russia are also refusing to block certain funds, which poses a problem. It takes money to wage war, so there is work to be done. I hope that part of our contribution as a country will be to have the money blocked.

I would like the hon. member to update me on the search for Gadhafi's billions.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

He is absolutely right: we have to focus more on diplomatic efforts and contribute to building democratic institutions in Libya once the conflict is over. I hope that will be soon.

That is what we did in Sudan. We provided the money and expertise for the negotiation of a comprehensive peace agreement. That is what we must focus on. He is absolutely right.

[English]

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I always have a great deal of respect for the member. He and I worked together on the environment committee in the last Parliament and, despite differences of opinion, he always came forward with thoughtful and well-researched positions to committee.

I agree with many of the comments that the member made today. It is important that the situation in Libya is brought to a quick resolution. We both agree that Colonel Gadhafi and his really brutal regime has been devastating for the Libyan people and that how it will be necessary to rebuild, once the war effort is over, within Libya and working with the Libyan people to find a solution to the current government.

I would like the member talk a bit about how important it is to actually develop the institutions that are required to support democracy, something that does not exist in that part of the world, and how, if we are going to have things like political parties, a government that is democratically elected or policy development that is done outside the realm of the people who control the government, then we need to help the Libyan people find ways to develop that infrastructure. I would just ask that the member provide comments along that line.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his kind words in my regard. Indeed, I enjoyed sitting on the environment committee when he was chairing it. I am a little

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saddened that neither of us will be on that committee working together.

Canada has great democratic expertise. I would point to my leader's previous work in helping to draft the Iraqi constitution. He went to Iraq at one point to help develop its new constitution.

Elections Canada sends election observers all around the world. We forget that we have a very highly evolved democratic infrastructure and that Elections Canada is a big part of that.

It will take money. We had to spend a great deal of money to help the people of Sudan with a comprehensive peace agreement. I do not see that we can get away with just lip service. We will need to invest in democracy.

•(1650)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-sor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak in this particular debate. Like other members in the House, I will take this opportunity, since it is my first occasion to officially debate, to thank the constituents of Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-sor for handing me the honour of serving them once again for the next four and a half or five years.

I will begin by talking about the subamendment that we in the Liberal Party have moved in the House, which reads:

That the amendment be further amended by inserting after the words "political transition", the following:

That the Government of Canada engage with the Libyan National Council (LNC) based in Benghazi as a legitimate political entity and representative of the Libyan people; that it provide the LNC with advice and assistance in governance, including women's rights;

And further by inserting after the words "alleged crimes", the following:

That it ensure that Canadian citizens, landed immigrants, or visitors to Canada are not subject to any threats or intimidation by representatives of the Gadhafi regime.

My hon. colleague spoke of the many situations in which we have involved ourselves in this particular conflict, and certainly for all the right reasons, reasons that pertain to the general philosophy or responsibility to protect, as my colleague talked about, or R2P, and how we have engaged in this type of diplomacy over the past 10 or 15 years. It is certainly incumbent upon us to uphold the values and security of these people, as well as their well-being in whichever situation they find themselves throughout the world, whether it be in the Middle East, areas of eastern Europe or in the Asia Pacific.

I just want to deal with the situation specifically in Libya. Over the past little while we have seen what is being called the Arab spring and the situation where governments have been overturned. In some situations, although not totally absent of violence, they certainly were far more peaceful compared to other situations that we have currently, whether it be the mass exodus of people throughout Syria and the situation we are discussing today, which is Libya.

We have had examples such as Tunisia and Egypt which were certainly situations not without violence but, nonetheless, far better regime change scenarios than what we are faced with now. We are now faced with that particular dictator, who has been in office since the late 1960s and, ironically, came in under peaceful means, who is now being forcibly thrown out of office by the international community, or at least that is the goal.

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I noticed an article in *The Economist* magazine several weeks ago that kind of outlines the situation regarding the people on the ground, the average citizens. It states:

Colonel Qaddafi's forces are running increasingly short of fuel. The people of Tripoli, his embattled capital, are short of just about everything, including food. The rebels in the east, based in Benghazi, are managing to import their basic requirements—and are getting diplomatically, politically and militarily better organised. The Qaddafi regime may hold out for a while yet, but time is not on its side. It is possible that it may implode.

We have not reached that scenario yet, but, as I said, that article was from a few weeks ago and we still find ourselves in that situation. We do, however, find ourselves in the wake of United Nations resolution 1973 regarding no-fly zones and, of course, UN Security Council resolution 1970, which talks about the strategic involvement of forces around the world. In this particular case, this is strong language from the UN spurred on by nations such as the United Kingdom. The British forces have taken the lead in this in many cases and, therefore, we are looking at what we feel is our ability to measure up when it comes to the situation for the people in Libya and also the basic human rights that are being trampled on in the most vicious and vile manner by a dictator who we know as Moammar Gadhafi.

I am very honoured that we have this opportunity to debate this in the House. So far, we have had a good, civilized debate, an illustration of just what we are fighting for in the nation of Libya, which is that some day the people of Libya can attain what we are doing here today, having a debate and the information bring put forward in the House to be received by the people of Canada. That, in and of itself, shows the model that we are striving for.

● (1655)

Although our forces are being engaged in dangerous tactics, such as strategic bombing and the actions of the HMCS *Charlottetown*, these are necessary actions by a government that believes we have a responsibility to protect. In this particular case, that is what drives the policy here. We want to protect people, particularly women and children, and their ability to have peace and security.

The international efforts underway in Libya, under resolutions 1970 and 1973, will be remembered as necessary resolutions carried out by the international community under the lead of Lieutenant General Bouchard.

I had the honour of meeting General Bouchard five or six years ago in Winnipeg. He is a gentleman with a great deal of responsibility on his shoulders with the NATO-led forces. He is indeed Canadian.

We called for the implementation of a no-fly zone and we support the military mission in Libya; however, this should be accompanied by diplomatic and political outreach efforts. I said earlier that this House is a model for which nations strive, that many nations have achieved, but some have not.

We need to help build the capacity for them to reach a level of political discourse that is peaceful, that provides security and well-being for all its citizens, and not just the select few. That way, like our country, the most vulnerable in society would be looked after and the institutions would remain to honour them. That is what we strive for. The measures taken by the UN, the NATO-led mission and

by our brave soldiers, will hopefully be achieved in a much shorter time than we imagined.

We must protect Libyan civilians. Parliament must have a say in this and all other combat operations, which I am glad we are doing here today. This has been a very civilized debate and I am honoured to take part in it.

We support the continuation of humanitarian aid to the people of Libya through organizations such as the United Nations Refugee Agency, which has done great work over the past little while and will continue to do so. As the active players, we are in and under the structure of the United Nations, and this is something that we are dedicated to. I am glad to hear that everybody in this House is of the same opinion.

The International Red Cross, as we have seen time and again around the world, is a beacon of hope for so many. It has been a shining inspiration for us, who may not require its assistance, and for many nations ravaged by natural disasters, such as Haiti. I had one in my riding last year and the Red Cross did play a role as well as the Canadian military.

In this particular situation, we should do all that we can in this House to provide the assistance required by the United Nations Refugee Agency as well as the International Red Cross as they do fantastic work.

Diplomacy development should be a significant element in Canada's approach to the situation in Libya. It is that capacity-building of democracy that we have been so good at over the past 30 years or more, since the days of Lester Pearson. We strive to become the broker of what is good in society, which is the capacity to build democracies through the infrastructure of social policies such as medicare. We strive for universal health care and for those who are most vulnerable.

It is beyond this particular mission, this three and a half months that we are debating, that we must look to. I am glad to hear that we are talking a lot about the humanitarian efforts involved in this mission that go beyond the particular timeline set out in this debate.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor for his comments. I had the good opportunity to be in his riding last summer. If anyone ever gets a chance to be there, they should definitely take it.

As I think about that, I am reminded of the freedoms we have in Canada and what the people in Libya are trying to achieve with a regime change and the atrocities they are facing.

My colleague always has good thoughts and opinions. I would appreciate his thoughts on how Canada might assist not only in humanitarian but democratic reform, particularly around human rights.

● (1700)

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his kind remarks.

I remember when we travelled together to the Council of Europe and saw debates engaged by democracies that were not at the level that we are. They lacked a majority. I am sure he also recalls some of the debates between nations such as Georgia and Russia, and just how tumultuous they were. No comparison to the good democracy that we have here.

The human rights aspect is key because, as I can only hope that this mission will see the end of the Gadhafi regime, then we will see the capacity-building that he speaks of to bring those human rights to the most vulnerable of that particular society.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to continue in the same vein as the hon. member for Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, who wondered how we will continue to help the people of Libya after the conflict. I would also like to know how we can continue to develop and encourage good governance, diplomacy and democracy in certain countries that may have been forgotten but are going through very difficult times, even though they have fallen off the radar screen.

[English]

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague and welcome her to the House of Commons. I thank her because I want to bring up a situation that I had the experience of seeing first-hand when I visited Israel and took a trip to the West Bank and went to Ramallah. At the time, one of the programs being talked about in the West Bank was one that was reliant on two nations in particular, the United States as well as Canada, to help strengthen its system to provide powers for its judicial branch of governance as well as other matters involving police security. What that illustrated was that there is one piece of governance that we do extremely well in and that we have the opportunity to bring that to other countries by telling them about our experiences. It is a piecemeal way of building capacity within nations.

Other nations have their strengths. France and even the U.K. could also help out with the local security issues that they deal with very well. As nations talking amongst each other at the United Nations were able to find out that this nation can provide this, that nation can provide that. Therefore, we should get together to provide what we see as a far better Libya after this debate as opposed to before this debate.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say first that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Since this is my first speech in the House, I would like to thank, as members usually do, the people in my riding for choosing me as their member. I would also, of course, like to thank my friends, my family, my mother and father, my wife, Chloé, and my whole campaign team.

As the Bloc critic for foreign affairs and defence, I am pleased to express my views to the House in a debate as important as this.

Last March 21, our party approved this mission for some very specific reasons.

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I should say at the outset that the Bloc Québécois will once again support the mission. We think, though, that Canada should be very careful with its actual implementation in the field.

The Bloc Québécois bases its support for this military mission in Libya on certain principles. The mission is being carried out, it must be said, at the peril of the men and women who chose to join the armed forces in order to serve the values and interests of their country, and who do so very responsibly and with great courage.

The principles to which we subscribe and which should continue to guide Canada and the other UN members involved in this action to provide military support to the persecuted civilian population are as follows: first, the multilateral nature of the military intervention, organized and directed by the Security Council and the United Nations; second, the specific strategic means laid out in resolutions 1970 and 1973 and legitimately approved in a vote of the House of Commons; and finally the ultimate purpose of the military intervention, which is to protect the lives of Libyan civilians.

It is important to say that, in our view, the international community's involvement in Libya stems from the doctrine of the responsibility to protect.

The doctrine of the responsibility to protect is based on three pillars: the primary responsibility of states to protect their own people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity; the responsibility of the international community to help a state discharge its duty to protect; and finally, in the case of particular concern here, the responsibility of the international community to take prompt, decisive action in accordance with the UN charter when a state manifestly fails in its duty to protect its people from one or more of these four major crimes.

In this spirit of democracy, our party would remind the House and the government that renewal of the Canadian mission in Libya, in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973, calls for the greatest political and military prudence.

We believe that at the end of this three-and-a-half-month extension, this mission and the operational framework for it will have to be debated much more fully. Among other things, the debate will have to allow for an assessment of actions on the ground, the financial costs of the mission and the results as they relate to the intended objectives.

Accordingly, the Bloc Québécois reminds the House that the sovereignty of Parliament is the guarantee of the sovereignty of all Canadians, through the representatives they have chosen. That is why the National Defence Act provides that Parliament must be convened to debate any military deployment abroad, and that is what we will have to do beyond that three and a half months, should that be the case.

The success of an effective intervention strategy in this case will depend on a combination of limited military interventions, that is, interventions that should be essential to protect civilians, in accordance with the United Nations resolution, and promotion of de-escalation of the conflict leading to a ceasefire and genuine political dialogue.

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• (1705)

We contend that Canada must continue to absolutely condemn the immoral use of force and abuses of power against Libyan citizens attributed to the Gadhafi regime, and in particular, as highlighted by the motion we are currently debating, the intolerable and inhumane practice of rape as a weapon of war, which transforms human bodies into machines of war and takes away the most fundamental security of the person.

Canada must also continue to promote recognition of the sovereignty of the Libyan people in determining their political destiny. On that point, the recent developments in the news attest to the desire expressed by the International Criminal Court prosecutor for Colonel Gadhafi to be arrested by his fellow Libyans.

Canada and NATO should demonstrate support more openly for diplomatic initiatives intended to achieve a ceasefire as soon as possible and to initiate a genuine dialogue in support of the efforts of the United Nations special envoy, Abdul Ilah Mohamed Al-Khatib.

We also welcome the decision by the International Criminal Court prosecutor to investigate what appear to be crimes against humanity in Libya. The Bloc Québécois would also like to say that it stands with and express its concern for Quebecers and Canadians of Libyan origin, who have been worried for some weeks now and must be even more worried today.

The Bloc Québécois therefore supports the government in extending Canada's military mission in the Libyan conflict based on the principles of respect for human life, respect for human rights and freedoms, and the political sovereignty of the Libyan people in their struggle for civil liberties and a better life, which is not without suffering for them.

Obviously this is not a case of military intervention with the aim of taking away the right of the Libyan people to sovereign self-determination, by invading or partitioning the country. On the contrary, the aim of the mission is to protect the lives of people who are determined to change their political situation at all costs.

The sequence of violent events in Libya shows that the adoption of resolutions 1970 and 1973 by the United Nations Security Council was necessary. As a result, our party supports the measures taken by Canada to implement resolution 1970, which in essence authorizes member states to seize and dispose of Libyan military equipment, impose an embargo on the sale of arms in Libya, impose sanctions against individuals and freeze their assets, facilitate and support the return of NGOs and humanitarian agencies to Libya, create a committee to monitor the situation in Libya, and co-operate with the International Criminal Court in its desire to bring the members of the Gadhafi regime who are accused of crimes against humanity to justice.

The Bloc Québécois also supports the government in the measures put in place to enforce resolution 1973, and in particular those measures relating to strengthening the freeze on assets provided for in resolution 1970.

Our party offers its support to the Government of Canada on a number of fundamental aspects of this humanitarian military mission. However, we must state our reservations concerning the

management of this operation and the financial costs incurred to date, as well as the costs that will be incurred over the coming months.

We call on the government to be more rigorous in its calculations so it is able to present Parliament with detailed cost estimates for carrying out this military campaign. The estimates done by defence experts who have spoken on this in the national media in recent days are completely contrary to the forecasts made by the Department of National Defence. Those experts say that the government is much too lax in calculating the costs of this military operation. How high might these costs go in reality? Right now, we do not know.

I would like to thank the members of the House for their attention. Rest assured that the Bloc Québécois is still here, although our numbers are fewer, and that we bring determination and rigour to our analyses, in order to defend democracy and human rights.

• (1710)

[English]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his election to the House.

As members are aware, our government is embarking on a three-pronged approach: the military involvement to stop the regime and to hold it accountable, the diplomatic efforts working with the National Transition Council to find a way forward for the Libyan people, and the humanitarian aid piece of the project.

Could the member comment on the announcement made earlier today by the Minister of International Cooperation regarding the assistance to the Red Cross and, in particular, the program to deal with gender-based violence?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

Of course, the government's support for increased humanitarian aid is important. Any additional humanitarian aid measures that can be put forward by this government will serve to improve conditions on the ground. Given the large number of refugees within the country's borders and the difficulty in providing supplies, the humanitarian aid that Canada can provide through organizations such as CIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency, will allow local organizations to provide care, food and everyday essentials.

• (1715)

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia on his speech, which I paid close attention to. I should point out that I felt it was somewhat contradictory, in that the hon. member put a lot of emphasis on humanitarian aid and diplomacy, yet he is fully supporting the Conservative motion.

Does he not feel that this motion is like handing the government a blank cheque? Would it not be more prudent and more in keeping with the will of Quebecers to go with the NDP's amendment?

Government Orders

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the clarification. First of all, the Bloc Québécois will support both the NDP motion and the Liberal amendment to the amendment, which will complete the government motion. To clarify, it is important to us—and my colleagues may have determined this from the approach presented—to set parameters for Canada's decision to continue its intervention in Libya.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are here today for this review primarily because the government has made a decision to have the House involved in trying to gain unanimous support for going forward with what is taking place in Libya.

I would be interested to hear the Bloc's perspective on whether it feels this is a good way to continue to proceed and whether we should come back to this in September or October in an attempt to continue to have this type of unanimous support from the House of Commons in going forward for what is happening in Libya?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to understand and to inform the House that when Parliament resumes in the fall, at the end of the three-and-a-half-month extension, the House will have to reflect on any further extension. We will have to have a much more complete analysis of this mission, in terms of the action taken, the costs and the results. We will require a complete analysis. I must point out that it is the House that must make any decision regarding the deployment of troops abroad. This fall, more information will have to be provided by the government so that we have a better analysis of the situation.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise in this House today to discuss Canada's role in the responsibility to protect civilian life in Libya. The United Nations Security Council resolution 1973 gave us that mandate.

Here, I want to be clear that had I been present in this House when this place first voted to support the mission, I would have voted with all the members present and said, "Yes, Canada has that role".

There is no greater obligation or moral responsibility falling to elected representatives in the course of any train of human events than the decision to send its fellow citizens into harm's way in a war zone and to risk their lives and the lives of others in pursuit of a cause in which it has been determined that only military action will suffice. In that sense, the Green Party acknowledges that there is such a thing as a just war, although the party, not just in Canada but also globally, subscribes as a fundamental principle to the pursuit of non-violence and peace.

In this context, the accepted international human rights norm of the responsibility to protect, which has been acknowledged since 2005, represents a new level of moral responsibility. Just as we might have said ages ago, "If someone beats their children, it's not our business" or "If a man beats his wife it's not our business, and we don't go into their house", now we have an exception to those notions of national sovereignty and can say that we can intercede. Now can go into their house because we recognize that there is a

wrong being conducted, that innocent lives are at risk and that we have a right to intervene under the responsibility to protect.

Why then do I fear that I must vote against this motion? We have seen what is now referred to as mission creep, an extension of the responsibility to protect within Libya to a goal of regime change.

In order to meet the goals of UN resolution 1973, our primary goal should be ceasefires, negotiated solutions and diplomacy. However, when the African Union came forward with a proposal through South African President Zuma, its peace proposal was rejected. Now there may have been other flaws, but the only peace proposal on the table that was accepted by the government of Gadhafi was rejected by key NATO partners, because we suddenly said that a precondition to any ceasefire must be the removal of Colonel Gadhafi.

I must be very clear here as well. I deeply desire the removal of Colonel Gadhafi, but not by military means in what appears to be a civil war in which Canada has taken sides. An immediate ceasefire is needed, yes. Protection of human life is required.

However, many of the things I have heard hon. members say in this House over the course of today could apply to other governments in whose countries we have not intervened. It is not enough to say, "We have not engaged in Syria, so we should not continue in Libya". It is not enough to say, "We have rejected the calls of the United Nations for peacekeepers to help end the systematic rape of women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, so we mustn't continue in Libya". I'm not saying that.

I am saying that other governments have their turned guns on their own peoples, whether in Myanmar or, as I prefer to call it, Burma, or in Syria or other places around the world, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where we are not engaged.

So when we do choose to engage, we must keep our eye on the mission. The mission is the protection of civilians.

My own experience of this is only generational. I can only speak of how I was raised by my father. My father grew up in London during the blitz and he shared with us something that I think we should all bear in mind when we decide to go to war. In his view, as he used to tell us when we watched bombs falling on North Vietnam, there is no greater way to strengthen the resolve of a civilian population than aerial bombardment and there is no greater way to solidify their resolve to detest those who drop the bombs than aerial bombardment.

• (1720)

We need to recognize that collateral damage is not just the lives of innocents that we inevitably lose in aerial bombardment. Collateral damage is damage to our very souls. Collateral damage damages our legitimacy. Collateral damage is something that, while inevitable in war, should be deeply avoided when our mission is to protect innocent lives and we are not a nation at war.

Government Orders

For these and many reasons, I depart from the very good and noble objectives that I recognize on all sides of this House. I recognize that the opposition parties have put forward amendments which essentially say “yes” to the government motion, but they say “yes, but”.

In my case, on behalf of the Green Party and my constituents of Saanich—Gulf Islands, I must say no, but I see we have a role as peacekeepers. I believe passionately that we return to our role as peacekeepers as a nation that is so well known around the world for peacekeeping. We have a role within NATO to be the nation that stands and says, enough of the aerial bombardment, now is the time to send in the diplomats. Let us work with colleagues who have some chance of reaching the illegitimate government of Mr. Gadhafi. Let us work with colleagues in the African Union, the Arab League and the United Nations, and be the country that says we do not continue to give a blank cheque to a mission that has no exit strategy.

With that and with deepest respect to all members on this side of the House, the other side of this place, I thank them all for what I know are deeply felt and high motives in going forward in the mission of Libya, but they will go forward without my vote.

• (1725)

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a former professional diplomat, I can assure the hon. member that now is not the time to send in the diplomats in the absence of military support and in the absence of military operations that are continuing.

However, in an effort to help the hon. member not become the outlier in this House on the vote later today, could I ask where she sees in the government motion, in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, in the objectives that are being pursued by NATO allies to protect civilians, to establish a no-fly zone, to enforce an arms embargo, where she sees in any of the positions taken by the government, or indeed the official opposition and the Liberal Party today, any intention to pursue regime change?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I recognize that the parliamentary secretary has significant and quite impressive credentials in this area personally and I salute him for that.

However, there are numerous indications in statements made today before this House. Various members of the government party have said there can be no peace while Mr. Gadhafi is present, we cannot negotiate unless Mr. Gadhafi is removed.

This is a report from the BBC in which the former head of the British army, Lord Dannatt said:

The mission under UNHCR 1973 is quite clear, it's to protect people but of course the implied task, and let's be absolutely open and honest about it, is the removal of Colonel Gadhafi

We have heard similar things from other representatives from within the NATO mission, particularly the chief, the chair of the group within the contact group on Libya. In the Doha meeting U.K. Foreign Secretary William Hague stated:

Participants remain united and firm in their resolve. Gadhafi and his regime have lost all legitimacy and he must leave power, allowing Libyan people to determine their own future.

There is ample evidence that the mission has shifted. In fact I mention to my hon. friend that if not for mission creep on the Libyan mission to protect civilians, we might not have lost the support of China and Russia in the United Nations to make a similar effort in Syria to protect lives there.

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her comments. I am a little puzzled, though. In her remarks she mentioned that she was aware of some of the atrocities that have allegedly been going on in Libya, including the allegations of mass rapes which have been ordered, apparently, by the Gadhafi forces. These are the subject of a prosecution by the International Criminal Court.

I wonder if she could explain to this House how we can sit back and not protect the women of Libya by using our military under the UN resolution to protect the civilian population of Libya if we do not pass this resolution today and continue our mission until these terrible atrocities are stopped?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier today in the course of this debate that the inconsistency of the government's position troubles me greatly.

We have been asked three times, not once but three times, by the United Nations to send two peacekeepers, and in particular Lieutenant General Andrew Leslie's name was mentioned, to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the proof of using rape as a systematic weapon of war affecting thousands and thousands of women calls for us to respond. We have rejected those requests.

In this instance I believe that we will have a role of great legitimacy as a nation that participated in the first phase of responsibility to protect, and then steps out of that role, working through the United Nations, to demand that we have peace negotiations with the first goal being a full ceasefire without the precondition of the Mr. Gadhafi's resignation.

• (1730)

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to make my first speech in the 41st Parliament.

I want to acknowledge the electors of Windsor—Tecumseh for having returned me to this office for the fifth time and to say a special thanks to all of the volunteers who worked on my election campaign, both in the May 2 election and any number of ones before that. It never ceases to amaze me, the willingness of volunteers to come forward and spend lots of hours and donate lots of money to support my candidacy. I accept that support with a great deal of humility.

Special acknowledgement to my wife of almost 42 years, my three children and their spouses for all the support they have given me since I have been here in the House, but a special note in this vein to the inspiration that my four grandchildren give me. That inspiration really leads into the role that we have to play here today and that is about building a better world, for them and for the children and grandchildren all across this globe.

Government Orders

I do not know if it has been enunciated as clearly as it could have been in the debate so far, so I want to address some comments to the reality of what we are engaged in here today in this debate and in this motion is quite historical. It is a minor step, but it is a reflection of a movement to change international law and international relations.

Canada has a great deal of reason to be proud for the work we have done, particularly since the second world war, in developing international standards for human rights. The Declaration of Human Rights was actually drafted by a Canadian. The work that we have done in developing peacekeeping as a methodology of reducing and in some cases eliminating war, and now the next step that we are taking, and again, in which Canada has played a major role at the United Nations, and that is to develop the principle of the responsibility to protect.

It is a basic principle and it is kind of interesting that it has taken us this long. I remember taking international law in law school. My professor at that time said that on average, it is at least 100 years, maybe 200 years before we evolve a new principle and actually enforce it in international law.

The reality is that since the second world war that timeframe has shrunk and we are moving, from a historical perspective, more rapidly to establish order where there is chaos, where there is violence, where there is war and where there are acts of inhumanity to our fellow citizens. The responsibility to protect is one of those next steps, much as establishing the International Criminal Court was.

Today when we are debating this, we really are debating when does the international community have a responsibility to step in and to say to a sovereign nation, because obviously the regime in Libya is at this point, that it does not have a right to put down peaceful protest, democratic rights of assembly or freedom of speech with the use of violence. The international community, the UN in particular, would say that a sovereign country does not have a right to kill its citizens; it does not have a right to commit war crimes; it does not have a right to commit crimes against humanity.

When we look at this motion today, we are recognizing that yes, we will be engaged along with a number of allies, in military action. What goes with that is again the responsibility to not just stop with the military action because we know it has limited usage.

● (1735)

We were forced to do this because of the intent expressed by Mr. Gadhafi to massacre those who opposed him, with the clear ability to do it, and the actions he had already begun to take to carry out that goal. However, it is not enough.

It is also not enough in these circumstances to say that we can do this indefinitely. The leadership of the insurgency in Libya, the people of Libya, ultimately have to resolve that themselves. The best we can do on an interim short-term basis is not allow Mr. Gadhafi to kill his people. That is as far as this motion takes it as the NDP see it.

The balance of the motion, though, is at least as important as that part of the motion that mandates military intervention on our part, and that is the need to see that the investigation that the International Criminal Court has initiated against members of that regime is properly resourced if, in fact, there is sufficient evidence to find there

have been breaches of international law, with crimes against humanity being at the top of that list. As a country, and along with our allies, we need to see that the investigation is conducted properly and if there is sufficient evidence that prosecutions are forthcoming. That is part of the evolution of what we are going through.

From everything I know about criminal activity, we are only going to be able to stop genocides, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity if the perpetrators of that kind of violence know they are not going to get away with it, that they are going to be caught and with proper investigations and sufficient evidence, they will be prosecuted, convicted and sentenced to an appropriate justice. If we do not build that mentality right around the globe, then we will have more Rwandas.

The humanitarian aid that we have proposed to add to this, which thankfully the government and the Liberals have agreed to now, is absolutely necessary. So we are clear, we are talking short-term aid. Libya overall is quite a wealthy country. It is not like Egypt and Tunisia that are in much worse economic shape. As this evolves, if there is a stable government there, it will be quite capable of taking care of the needs of all of its people. However, in the interim, humanitarian aid is absolutely necessary.

With regard to the support that we have shown for this resolution, it is clear that the UN, under Resolution 1973, has not only called on members of the United Nations to take part in military action, but it is obviously requiring diplomatic endeavours to have a ceasefire to end the violence on both sides so that the killing stops.

Canada has to take a more active role in that. I draw the attention of the members to the work that Turkey and Norway are doing in terms of trying to resolve this in a peaceful way. We certainly should be assisting them by stepping up at the diplomatic level our activities in that regard.

I would be remiss if I did not speak about the role that communities in Windsor Essex County have played. The second weekend after the insurgency and the violence started in Libya, a significant rally was held with some fundraising. Just in those few days over \$400,000 was raised, not just in the Windsor area but other parts of Canada as well. This was led mostly by the medical community. We have a large number of expatriate Libyans now Canadian citizens who practise medicine in this country. They were a big part of the fundraising.

● (1740)

I met with one of the doctors a couple of weeks ago, before the House started back. He had just come back from Libya. He was telling me that they had been rotating medical personnel from Canada, mostly expatriate Libyans, back through Libya on a two-week rotation, in a lot of cases providing expert medical attention. It is absolutely needed.

In addition to that, they have raised additional funds. He was estimating it at least several million dollars just from the community in Canada. They were moving food and medicine into Benghazi in particular and were about to move it through Misrata as well.

Government Orders

All that work was done within the community in Canada, by their efforts both in terms of providing the medical services and in terms of providing medicine and food. He was critical of the government for not doing more in terms of providing humanitarian aid.

I applaud the government for its announcement today on the increased amounts it is giving, but it is not enough. The needs in the eastern part of Libya are particularly great and we have to step that effort up with assistance through the NGOs across the globe.

I actually spoke to the group at one point. There was a fundraiser dinner one night. We were talking about whether there would be military intervention. When I got off the stage, I was surrounded by the members of the community. They were very clear and adamant that they would not have their country, in spite of the violence that was going on, occupied by anybody else.

It is one of the reasons why we in the NDP were adamant in amending this motion, so it would be very clear that this mandate would not allow for any ground troops to be put into Libya. The euphemism of “no boots on the ground” is an absolute for the Libyan population.

There have been too many times in their history when they have been occupied, to their great detriment, and they are not prepared to tolerate that ever again.

I have listened to the debate, off and on, today. It has been interesting. With regard to the role that we should be playing, the absolute need is for Canada to be extremely careful of not dictating what the outcome is going to be in the sense of building democracy there. That has to be led by the Libyans themselves.

Again, we put very clear wording in the amendments that we proposed to this motion, and accepted by the government, that it has to be a Libyan-led transition. It cannot be dictated by Canada or by the international community.

We can be there to provide assistance, if they need assistance and if they ask for it. We should be there to assist them, whether it be in humanitarian aid or in building democracy. It may be a democracy that is not similar to ours and certainly not the same as ours. We have to be broadminded enough to still provide support if that is requested, so they can build their democracy as they see fit.

Again, I was bit concerned with some of the comments today about what our role should be in that regard. I think we have to be brave enough and courageous enough to step back. This is an independence movement in many ways in Libya, led by people, the young people in a lot of cases, who are very determined that they will do it their way.

We absolutely do not have a right to be dictating to them the type of government that will be established. We can only be there to provide support. This is true of any other number of countries that are looking for assistance. We do not dictate the outcome.

● (1745)

I want to make one final comment and then I have a couple of amendments I want to propose.

Going back to the point about military intervention and talking about all of the other countries that also need support, we cannot use

that as an excuse. As I said earlier in my opening comments, this is a baby step that we are taking with regard to establishing the responsibility to protect. Our responsibility as members of the United Nations, when it passes a resolution like 1973, is to support it.

We do not have the resources to do it for every country in the world that needs help, but we can, as an example, say to other countries that we are doing it here and if we could afford to or were able to, we would do it elsewhere always under the auspices of the United Nations. We want the rest of the world to come onside. It would not be a baby step if we got the rest of the world onside, but we can provide some leadership in that regard. If we provide the leadership and get the rest of the world to follow suit, then perhaps our grandchildren and maybe our great grandchildren will never be faced with genocide in their lifetimes.

There are a couple of problems with the motion as it is. I think I have general consent and support for what I am about to propose. In the original motion, the government used the phraseology of “another extension”. We want to be very clear. The NDP position is there will only be this extension and we want that singularized. I will come back to the actual wording in a moment.

The Liberal subamendment referred to the transitional council as the Libyan National Council. It is occasionally called that, but its formal name is the National Transitional Council and is generally recognized around the globe as that. Therefore, I seek the unanimous of the House for the following. I move:

That the motion from the government be amended by replacing the phrase “another extension” with “an extension”, and also that the subamendment be changed by replacing “Libyan National Council (LNC)” with the “National Transitional Council (NTC)”.

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment to the amendment to the amendment is in order. Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the amendment to the amendment to the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment to the amendment to the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Amendment to the amendment to the amendment agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh has basically summed up any remarks I would have made.

I wanted to extend particular appreciation from the Edmonton Libyan community, which has held a series of rallies in Edmonton in which I participated. All along it has called for and asked for the support of Canada in exactly the way the amended motion calls for.

Government Orders

This request is coming from the fathers, husbands, women and children who are very concerned about their families in the communities in Libya. I know we will be very grateful for the continued support and intervention so long as that intervention is limited to and extended to providing humanitarian support and being there for the purpose of protecting the families of Libya.

● (1750)

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that the national council that has been formed in the last few months in Canada has a good number of participants from Alberta, both Calgary and Edmonton, particularly from the medical community. Some of the same members have been going through the rotation, particularly in Benghazi, in providing services to their compatriots.

My colleague is correct about the absolute refusal to accept ground troops, but the acknowledgement that they needed the assistance to stop the killings, both the ones that had occurred and the ones that clearly would occur if the international community had not intervened. The council has been very strong on that. In fact, that council is now led, I believe, by two of the doctors from the Alberta community.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to agree with the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh with regard to the historic nature of this debate and the unprecedented nature of the near unanimity we have achieved and are set to achieve again today.

However, I would like to ask the member this. Given his riding's own connection with Canadian military history by being named after a great Canadian warrior, and given the many principles that underlie our continuing multilateral action in Libya extending from the emphasis on local leadership, the Arab League, the African Union involvement, the UN authorization, the collective action under NATO auspices, human rights, avoiding civilian casualties, the quick reference to the International Criminal Court, the responsibility to protect, one of its earliest and I think clearest attempts at implementation, as well as the humanitarian agenda which underpins so much of the discussion that we are having today and the challenges on the ground, would he not agree that in many ways this mission not only bears heavy involvement by Canada but Canadian fingerprints in many respects, given our country's involvement in the establishment of these institutions and the formulation of these policies over decades?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, I would agree with my colleague and I thank him for the question.

As I said in my speech, the role that we played historically since the second world war probably does not have any other country in the world as a peer. We have possibly done more in providing that leadership than any other country in the world.

I have to say to my colleague that the work done in Afghanistan I think was an error. We went off on an angle that we should not have in that regard and that has hurt our reputation internationally. However, we certainly have every right to claim a role here.

Let me make this point. I believe we are also at the stage where we are moving forward from simply peacekeeping to peacemaking, but we can only do that under the auspices of the United Nations. Therefore, we have to be supportive of the United Nations and must

work over the next decades to put in place a system that does not allow at any given time the major powers to dictate what type of intervention there will be in a sovereign nation's decisions. It would only be an international body that would do that based on international law. We should be very much a part of that movement.

● (1755)

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the course of listening to and participating in the debate throughout the day there were a couple of things that strike me. One is that it is abundantly clear that regime change is not an explicit goal although it clearly would be consistent with the explicit goals of the mission. The other is that there really does not appear to be any clarity around an exit strategy. Coming from my background, we would commonly say if we cannot measure it, we cannot manage it. I would be interested in the member's comments on what are the benchmarks against which we measure the success of the mission.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, I disagree adamantly with his initial premise that somehow this motion would be supportive of a regime change agenda. I want to be absolutely clear, as I believe have all of the speakers from the NDP who have addressed this issue today, that we are not supportive of an agenda that leads to regime change. That is not our decision; that is not our role. We are simply dealing with military action because we need to protect civilian lives. Therefore, I reject that premise totally.

With regard to assessing whether this has an exit strategy for us, it is quite simple. Canada will not be there in three and a half months. It is as simple as that. Therefore, there is an exit strategy and there is a way of testing it. If we look at three and a half months from now, which I think is the middle of September, we will not be there.

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciated working with my hon. colleague in the past on the justice committee and I look forward to working with him in this Parliament. I am a little confused by his last statement.

The United Nations resolution, which I think we all support, says that we must protect the lives of civilians. If the Gadhafi regime is still brutally killing, torturing, raping, and committing other atrocities against civilians, do we not continue to have an obligation to do what we can to protect them whether that ends on September 15 or not? I would like to hear his comments on that.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, I have to say to my colleague from Mississauga—Erindale that he has abandoned the justice committee and will not be on it in this Parliament. I am not going to forgive him for that. We had some great battles there.

With regard to the question, and it certainly is a valid one, the reality is that if the fighting is still going on in three and a half months, it clearly is a complete civil war and we cannot do anything at that point to be of assistance. When I say "we", I mean the international community. It is as simple as that.

The alternative, if we accept that we are going to continue on, would be to move troops on the ground and all the rest of it. That is not the way we should be building that system that I talked about in my opening comments.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is an important debate today, not just in form but in substance. What is just as important in the motion and the amendments is the word solidarity. Today is an important day. We must not forget the horrors of the Holocaust. We have a responsibility, as citizens of the world, to ensure such horrors never reoccur. Dictators must be fought. Canada has always taken a stand when it was time to intervene. We have all due regard for the sovereignty of countries, but there comes a time when civilians must be protected and we must act.

Every time I see things like what is happening in Libya—I asked a question this morning about this—I think of General Dallaire and what happened in Rwanda. We do not want history to be forever repeating itself. We have a responsibility, therefore, as parliamentarians and as a country to intervene and demonstrate our solidarity with the people of Libya, who are suffering terribly.

We could talk about what is happening in Syria, in the Middle East, or elsewhere in Africa and in other countries. Every case is unique, but the basic principle is the same. I was proud to serve as a Liberal minister, and I have sat on both sides of the House. Canada must always take a stand when civilians need protection. That is why we supported Canada's participation in the Afghan mission from the outset. That is why we support this motion today, although not blindly. We have to be specific, and that is why we support UN Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973.

Every time we have had this kind of debate in the House, the Liberal Party has replied ready, aye, ready, whether as the government or the official opposition, as it is today. Regardless of who our leader was, we have always been there to protect people. It is important to us that this motion be based on protecting civilians from an imminent threat and imposing a no-fly zone.

We do not believe that troops should be put on the ground. We have already established an air mission. We are providing support. We belong to NATO and the UN. If Canada had won a seat on the UN Security Council, it might have been able to play a more significant role. Today, as parliamentarians, we must show, with civility, just how much Canada must play a leading role and participate actively in this mission.

What is happening in Libya is serious. We saw the Jasmine Revolution this spring in the Maghreb, in the Middle East. We saw our Tunisian brothers and sisters take the future into their own hands and play a major role in fighting dictators. We saw the exact same thing in Egypt.

However, I do not believe that we should take a piecemeal approach. As far as I am concerned, Canada's foreign policy should not be dictated by a military operation. The military is both necessary and important because it is the strong arm of our democracy, but policies must be determined by Foreign Affairs. That is why we have always provided constructive criticism about certain aspects of the Afghan mission. When it comes to Libya, a piecemeal approach will not work. We need a diplomatic and humanitarian strategy so that the Libyan people can take the future into their own hands. We have an international responsibility, along with other countries, to support the people and civilians who are suffering.

● (1800)

That is why we completely agree. We have said so from the beginning. We have called for the imposition of a no-fly zone since the start of the violence.

I think that we must do much more. I agree with my colleagues who have said that, obviously, the Libyan people must take their future into their own hands. We need to be there to support governance and to give them tools to establish their own democracy. There is no room for ethnocentrism. We must not impose our own values and our way of life. There are universal democratic and humanitarian values. We have always said that we must not give people fish; we must teach them to fish. We must give them the tools they need. It will cost money. In its strategy, the government must not say that it will send planes and that this will just be a military operation. We will have to ensure that we give these people development tools so that they can take charge of their own transition.

That is our role, that is how we do things, how we see things as Canadians. Regardless of the government, I believe that the only way this has a chance of being successful is if we are there to provide support. We are not there to replace. We are there to support. If we want to help the Libyan people, the first thing we must do is support these military missions and play a role. I have a hard time saying that in three and a half months, we will withdraw. We do not know what will happen in three and a half months. Hopefully things will go well during that period, but what is important is for Parliament to hold a new debate if, after three and a half months, there are still problems. I think we have to be realistic.

This is not peacemaking. This is peacekeeping. We can always interpret chapter 7 or chapter 8 on humanitarian missions, if necessary, but we do not want to relive what happened in Rwanda. We need to give this a chance.

In terms of diplomacy, there is also a geopolitical reality to consider, since it is not just Libya. Libya has borders. Tunisia and Egypt are also in turmoil. Their reality, what they are learning, must also be considered. The people there are taking control of their own destiny and a new reality is emerging, since the dictators will be judged or have been arrested.

That is why we must ensure that, in each mission, the most important things are the three D's: diplomacy, development and defence. We have already talked about this. Our mission should be based around this notion, in order to make sure it can work.

Canada has a role to play. Realistically speaking, Canada has certain capabilities. We have always been quite strong, for I recall some of our concrete actions, and not just in Afghanistan. There was also Haiti. We have made important contributions in several countries. Canada has a role to play in governance, in assistance, in support for governance and in terms of development tools for democracy, but we also have an important role to play in the International Criminal Court. We cannot allow these crimes to go unpunished. We need to ensure that Gadhafi pays for what he has done.

I hear people talking about a regime change versus just protecting civilians. There is a fine line. The most important thing is stopping the horrors that are taking place right now. It is completely deplorable and unacceptable that rape is being used as a weapon of war, as in Congo. It has even been said that Gadhafi gives his soldiers Viagra. It is completely unacceptable. We must ensure that these actions do not go unpunished.

We will have a role to play in the transition. We will have a role to play in terms of the International Court. I see my colleague, one of our greatest former justice ministers, who played a key role in the creation of the International Criminal Court.

• (1805)

We must ensure during the transition, if we want to give these people a chance, that crimes do not go unpunished. We must absolutely play a role in that regard.

We are going to work constructively and co-operatively with all parliamentarians in order to fully play our role.

• (1810)

[English]

I guess we are not seen everything that is going on in the field. A lot of stuff is happening there. I hope we put partisanship aside and that, as Canadians, we will play our role of citizens of the world. We cannot just allow dictators like that do what they do without taking our own responsibility.

The global village is there now. There are no more boundaries, no more frontiers, and we have a role to play. The Canadian way is the triple D, as I said. It is diplomacy, development and defence, and we just cannot go at the menu à la carte saying that we will do one and then the other. If we had that way of doing things, people would not be on side.

We need to send a clear message. I was very pleased to hear my colleagues from the official opposition also say that we are there for the citizens, the civilians, to ensure they are protected. That is our role. Whether we are a member of the Security Council or not, we have a role to play as a country.

[Translation]

Those were the few words I wanted to say on behalf of my constituents in Bourassa. I wanted to give my opinion on a situation that, unfortunately, is a reality in a number of countries. Obviously, we will address them one at a time. It is important to add that the Liberal Party of Canada stands in solidarity—the word “solidarity” is important here—with all parliamentarians to protect people and ensure that dictators like Gadhafi can never be in this position again.

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The diplomatic reality is such that we do not always understand how things happen on the ground, but the primary objective is to ensure that we can protect the civilians, protect the people and make the world a better place. It is our responsibility, in our Canadian democracy, to play this role. I thank the government and all parliamentarians for playing this role today. This is an important debate for Canada.

[English]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to reiterate now that, this morning, the Minister of International Cooperation made the announcement of another \$2 million going into humanitarian aid to Libya, \$250,000 of which is to go toward helping women and girls who have been the victims of gender-based violence.

I wonder if the hon. member, who condemned, as all of us have, that kind of use of violence as a tool of war, could comment on how this \$250,000 will assist these women and girls, particularly in Libya.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Madam Speaker, today it is not a matter of saying that we have given a certain amount. There must be zero tolerance. Not only must we invest money, but we must also ensure, when international treaties or conventions are signed, that we are capable of fully carrying out our responsibilities. I am thinking of child soldiers, for example. We sign treaties, but I sometimes feel that we just go through the motions of supporting them. I am not speaking about a specific government, but in general terms.

Yes, we do have to invest money and ensure that we are not just cutting a ribbon or writing a cheque to feel good. But there must also be follow-up. When we attend meetings of the UN Security Council and sign a treaty or convention, we must be able to implement it in order to prevent such events from happening again. We must thus push back the limits of impunity. There must be zero tolerance. In this process, there is no room for ethnocentrism, and the Libyan people must take charge of their destiny through the national transitional council. They must also ensure that, in future, the rights of women will be respected, the ravages of war will be prevented, and efforts will be made in terms of the culture. They must ensure that such situations do not happen again.

We must be very careful. We are pleased that the government is investing money, but it is not just about the money. Resources are not all about money. This is also about the will to make change and how to go about it, and the resulting political work. One day, we will no longer be there. The cameras will no longer be focused on what is happening in Libya because there will be another problem somewhere else. And when we have forgotten, other things will happen. Just because we are withdrawing from Afghanistan and are proud of what we have accomplished there does not mean that no more horrors will take place.

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How can we ensure that there is follow-up? That is the diplomatic and multilateral role of Canada in international institutions. It is the duty of any self-respecting government to ensure that we do more than just give money. Furthermore, we cannot say that the cheque is in the mail because Canada Post is on strike. There must be substantial follow-up, we must work more closely with the Department of Foreign Affairs, make good use of our diplomats, and work with our NGOs in gathering intelligence and taking action to protect the people.

• (1815)

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Bourassa for sharing his comments with us and for presenting such an informative speech.

He agrees with everyone here that we need to support the people of Libya in their transition. He emphasized the three D's. We have different ways of expressing this concept, but the Canadian government needs to co-operate with other governments and use all available tools.

There has been some discussion today regarding governance, an area that tends to fall between development and diplomacy. It is part of both and cannot be separated from either. How does the member think a country like Canada could support the creation of new civil institutions in Libya? Should it be through our existing institutions? Can he think of a new approach that can be used to reach the objective he talked about in his speech?

Hon. Denis Coderre: Madam Speaker, I think that governance should be a matter for the Department of Foreign Affairs; this is a diplomatic matter. There are several ways we can go about it, but there is one thing I would not want to see. At one point, in Afghanistan, National Defence had a committee specifically under the CDS, which advised Mr. Karzai. That is not the role of National Defence, in my opinion. It has a role to play, but that is not it. It has done things well in military terms, but when it comes to governance it is important that this really be under the auspices of Foreign Affairs.

I am in favour of multilateralism. We can work with the United Nations, and Canada can provide support for a mission organized by the UN. That has been done in several cases in the past, particularly with MINUSTAH, in Haiti, where we played a supporting role in relation to governance, reconstruction, justice and all that. There may also be bilateral agreements between Canada and Libya.

Canada must play an even more important role in the Arab world. Governance in Libya is important, but things have been done in Egypt by our former colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. We will have to do things in Tunisia, for example. I do not understand why we have not yet frozen the assets of Ben Ali's brother-in-law.

We have to face certain facts, and this will call for a hybrid approach to things. One thing I know, however, is that Canada has a reputation when it comes to democracy and governance. Canada can very certainly play a role, in relation both to existing institutions and to establishing a bilateral strategy.

• (1820)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is encouraging to see, in the manner in which this motion has come before us, the support for both the subamendment and amendment.

I ask the question of my colleague posed by a previous speaker, who indicated that after three and a half months, we should be looking at pulling out of Libya, at least that is what was being implied.

Does my colleague believe that this would be advisable for the federal government? What potential impact would something of this nature have, if we were to take the advice of that particular member?

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Madam Speaker, we have to be realistic. If the government says it is conducting its mission and pulling out three and a half months later, it will never work. However, if it co-operates with the foreign affairs critics and if we could be updated on this issue as it develops, that would be different. I would not want us to make a hasty decision without seeking permission from Parliament. We must not decide, after three and a half months, that it is time to pull out.

We do not know what is going to happen in three and a half months. It will go by quickly. Will Gadhafi still be there? According to some, we were supposed to be rid of him, but there have been many bombs since the beginning. There is even talk of civil war. The United Nations has a role to play. The right thing to do is to have another debate here before making any hasty decisions.

I understand that for political reasons the NDP is against NATO. Some NDP MPs wanted us to pull out of Libya immediately and "keep our powder dry", as they say. Let us talk first and adopt the right policy. What we want above all is to protect the civilians, the people of Libya. After that, we will hold another debate, but we must not pull out too quickly.

[English]

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank all of my colleagues who have spent the better part of today debating what I believe to be an absolutely important discussion for us to undertake as parliamentarians.

Any time we consider the actions of any government going to war, the responsible thing for the government to do is to go to the Canadian people and ask for their permission to act on their behalf.

Today we have seen the commitment of our Prime Minister realized in this House. The Prime Minister made it very clear during the last election, as he has over his time as prime minister, that he would continue to act on behalf of Canadians but only with the permission of this House when it comes to going into a combat or conflict zone. So it is really a privilege for me to stand and be part of this discussion undertaken by members of all parties in this House.

Today I had the opportunity to go to the Holocaust memorial service held at the war museum here in Ottawa. I heard from representatives of many of the parties in this House. The unifying theme of all the speeches given by all of the party leaders and representatives of different parties was that we must act to help those who are the most vulnerable in their time of need. There was even a reference by the leader of the Green Party to Canada, to a certain extent, having failed the Jewish people by coming in so late.

If there is one thing that we Canadians never want to do, it is to come late to the rescue of those who are the most vulnerable in our world. As we look at the Libyan people today, especially the women and children, I cannot think of a more vulnerable population that we as Canadians have an opportunity to advocate on behalf of.

We Canadians did go to Libya, first and foremost, to protect the civilian population that had seen its own government attack the most vulnerable in the country. We are there in collaboration with our NATO partners and under the auspices of the United Nations Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973.

This House did unanimously agree that we must bring forward sanctions. We brought them forward, and all parties agreed. As members of this House, we also endorsed military action in Libya.

I think it is important for us to remind ourselves why we did that. We did see the horrific reality of the Libyan military attacking the most vulnerable in its own country, a government attacking its own people.

In history when we have seen this happen, we have known there was little opportunity and little chance for the civilian population to move out of a conflict like that unscathed or prepared to see freedom happen. That is why it is so important that we are there today and that we continue and complete the mission we set out to do, which is to protect the most vulnerable.

Since the conflict started, we have heard of alleged acts of sexual violence by the Gadhafi regime against those who are most vulnerable in Libya. Those include the attacks on women and children and the use of rape as a tool of war.

Any time in world history when we have seen regimes use this type of weapon of war, we have understood that the effects of this will not just be short term in the country but long term.

As we hear of the realities of that, we cannot even imagine them. I am a father of two young girls. I cannot imagine what I would do to someone who came to brutally rape my daughters or my wife. However, we realize there are fathers and husbands at this moment who are being hauled off and slaughtered in some cases. In other cases, they are standing there helpless, unable to care for or protect their children and wives.

• (1825)

That is why we as Canadians have the responsibility, when we hear the reports of this, and have the ability and the tools and the strength to go in there and free those people, to do everything in our power to do that.

Our Prime Minister did act swiftly when we saw what was happening in Libya. From the outset, the Prime Minister did push for

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swift and decisive action not only here in Canada but also in the international community. The reality is that without that swift action, far worse conditions would have developed. We as Canadians, having advocated swift action and gone in there, now have a responsibility to carry through with the action the House endorsed.

The reality is that much of what we went in there to help solve remains. The Gadhafi regime is still there, actively warring against its own people, which speaks to our responsibility to continue to advocate on behalf of those who are the most vulnerable in Libya.

When we consider what we have to do, we realize there is the military component in which we are engaged, as this Parliament knows well, but we must also continue on both the diplomatic and humanitarian sides. Our ministers have spoken about the contributions this government has made on the humanitarian side. That is important as well.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:30 p.m., pursuant to order may Monday, June 13, 2011, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of Motion No. 1 under government business.

The question is on the amendment to the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment to the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment to the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1855)

[English]

(The House divided on the amendment to the amendment, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 4)

YEAS

Members

Ablenozcy
Adler
Albrecht
Allen (Weiland)
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Armstrong
Ashton
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bateman
Bennett

Adams
Albas
Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Angus
Ashfield
Aspin
Aubin
Baird
Bellavance
Benoit

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)

Allison
 Ambrose
 Anderson
 Armstrong
 Ashton
 Atamanenko
 Ayala
 Bateman
 Bennett
 Benskin
 Bezan
 Blanchette-Lamothe
 Block
 Burg
 Boulerice
 Brahmī
 Breitkreuz
 Brossseau
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Bruinooge
 Byrne
 Calkins
 Caron
 Casey
 Charlton
 Chisholm
 Chong
 Chow
 Clarke
 Clement
 Comartin
 Cotler
 Cullen
 Daniel
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 Day
 Del Mastro
 Dewar
 Dionne Labelle
 Doré Lefebvre
 Dubé
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dusseau
 Eysing
 Fast
 Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
 Fortin
 Fry
 Gallant
 Garrison
 Genest-Jourdain
 Gill
 Godin
 Goldring
 Goodyear
 Gourde
 Grewal
 Harper
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hassani
 Hayes
 Hilley
 Hoepfner
 Hsu
 Hyer
 James
 Julian
 Keddy (South Shore St. Margaret's)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lamouroux
 Larose
 Lauzon
 Layton
 LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
 Leef
 Lemieux
 Leung
 Lizon
 Lukiwski
 MacAulay
 MacKenzie
 Marston
 Amblar
 Anders
 Angus
 Ashfield
 Aspin
 Aubin
 Baird
 Bellavance
 Benoit
 Bevington
 Blanchette
 Blaney
 Boivin
 Boughen
 Boutin-Sweet
 Braid
 Brison
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Brown (Barrie)
 Butt
 Calandra
 Cannan
 Caric
 Cash
 Chicoine
 Chisu
 Choquette
 Christopherson
 Cleary
 Coderre
 Côté
 Crowder
 Cuzner
 Davidson
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Dechert
 Devolin
 Dion
 Donnelly
 Dreeschen
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Dykstra
 Fanina
 Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
 Fletcher
 Freeman
 Galipeau
 Garneau
 Genest
 Giguère
 Glover
 Goguen
 Goodale
 Gosal
 Gravelle
 Grogulé
 Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hawn
 Hiebert
 Hloback
 Holder
 Hughes
 Jacob
 Jean
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Kellway
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Lapointe
 Latendresse
 Laverdière
 Label
 LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
 Leitch
 Leslie
 Liu
 Lobb
 Lunney
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Mai
 Martin

Government Orders

Masse
 Mayes
 McColeman
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 Menegakis
 Merrifield
 Miller
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood Port Coquitlam)
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
 Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
 Mourani
 Murray
 Nash
 Norlock
 O'Connor
 Obhrai
 Opitz
 Papillon
 Patry
 Payne
 Penashuc
 Perreault
 Pilon
 Plamondon
 Preston
 Rac
 Raitt
 Rathgeber
 Raynault
 Reid
 Richards
 Rickford
 Rousseau
 Shea
 Shory
 Sors
 Sins (Newton—North Delta)
 Smith
 Sorenson
 Stanton
 Stoffer
 Strahl
 Sweet
 Tilson
 Toews
 Tremblay
 Trotter
 Turnell
 Uppal
 Valenote
 Van Loan
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Wilks
 Wong
 Yelich
 Young (Vancouver South)
 Mathysen
 McCallum
 McGuinity
 McLood
 Menzies
 Michaud
 Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
 Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
 Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
 Mulcair
 Nantel
 Nicholls
 Nunez-Melo
 O'Neill Gordon
 Oliver
 Pacetti
 Paradis
 Payne
 Penashuc
 Pilon
 Poilievre
 Quach
 Rafferty
 Rajotte
 Ravignat
 Regan
 Rempel
 Richardson
 Ritz
 Saganash
 Savoie
 Scarpaleggia
 Seebach
 Sgro
 Shipley
 Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls Wind-
 Sitsabaikan
 Sopuck
 St-Denis
 Stewart
 Storseth
 Sullivan
 Thibeault
 Toet
 Toone
 Trost
 Truppe
 Tweed
 Valcourt
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Warawa
 Watson
 Young (Oakville)
 Zimmer — 294

NAYS

Members

May — 1

Nil

PAIRED

The Speaker: I declare the amendment as amended carried.

The next question is on the main motion, as amended.

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you would find agreement to apply the vote, with the Conservatives voting yes.

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The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, the members of the NDP will be voting yes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party will be voting in favour of the motion.

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc will be voting in favour of the motion.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I will be voting no.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*(Division No. 6)***YEAS****Members**

Ablonczy Adams
Adler Albas
Albrocht Alexander
Allen (Welland) Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison Ambler
Ambrose Anders
Anderson Angus
Armstrong Ashfield
Ashton Aspin
Atamanenko Aubin
Ayala Baird
Bateman Bellavance
Bennett Benoit
Benskin Bevington
Bezan Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe Blancy
Block Boivin
Borg Boughen
Boulterice Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi Braid
Breitkreuz Brison
Brosseau Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora) Brown (Barric)
Bruinooge Butt
Byrne Calandra
Calkins Cannan
Caron Carre
Cascy Cash
Charlton Chicoine
Chisholm Chisu
Chong Choquette
Chow Christopherson
Clarke Cleary
Clement Codere
Comartin Côté
Cotler Crowder
Cullen Cuzner
Daniel Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway) Davies (Vancouver East)
Day Dechert
Del Mastro Devolin
Dewar Dion
Dionne Labelle Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre Dreschen
Dubé Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North) Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Duscault Dykstra
Eyking Fantino
Fast Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk) Fletcher
Fortin Freeman
Fry Galipeau
Gallant Garneau

Garrison Genest
Genest-Jourdain Giguère
Gill Glover
Godin Goguen
Goldring Goodale
Goodyear Gosal
Gourde Gravelle
Grewal Groguhé
Harper Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East) Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hassania Hawn
Hayes Hiebert
Hilleyer Hoback
Hoepfner Holder
Hsu Hughes
Hyer Jacob
James Jean
Julian Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's) Kellway
Kenney (Calgary Southeast) Kent
Kerr Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings) Lake
Lamoureux Lapointe
Larose Latendresse
Lauzon Laverdière
Layton Lebel
LeBlanc (Beauséjour) LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leaf Leitch
Lemieux Leslie
Leung Liu
Lizon Lobb
Lukiwski Lunney
MacAulay MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie Mai
Marston Martin
Masse Mathysen
Mayes McCallum
McColeman McGuinity
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood) McLod
Menegakis Menzies
Merrifield Michaud
Miller Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord) Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle) Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani Mulcair
Murray Nantel
Nash Nicholls
Norlock Nunez-Melo
O'Connor O'Neill Gordon
Obhrai Oliver
Opitz Pacetti
Papillon Paradis
Patry Paync
Péclert Penashue
Perreault Pilon
Plamondon Poilievre
Preston Quach
Rac Rafferty
Raitt Rajotte
Rathgeber Ravignat
Raynault Regan
Reid Rempel
Richards Richardson
Rickford Ritz
Rousseau Saganash
Sandhu Savoie
Saxton Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger Seckack
Sellah Sgro
Shea Shipley
Shory Summs (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Smith
Sorenson
Stanton
Stoffer
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Toews
Tremblay

Sitsabaican

Sopuck

St-Denis

Stewart

Storseth

Sullivan

Thibeault

Toet

Toome

Trout

Trotter	Truppo
Turnell	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Valeriote	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Yellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer— 294

NAYS

Members

May— 1

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion, as amended, carried.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

● (1910)

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada recently tabled two reports concerning our international climate change obligations.

The first report detailed our federal climate change policies and their impact on meeting Canada's international obligations under the Kyoto protocol. That report very clearly affirms that the Conservative government has absolutely no plan when it comes to climate change. The report shows that once again the government's inaction will see our country miss our own completely inadequate climate change goals by 75%, if it can be believed. The goals are inadequate to start with, and then we are going to miss them by 75% in 2020.

This report also shows government stalling on implementing some regulations, for example, renewable energies content or energy efficiency standards. This has resulted in even lower emissions reductions than we had planned. I would say that clearly climate change is not a priority for the government.

It was not mentioned in the throne speech. It was not mentioned in the budget. The upcoming budget cuts will only undermine Environment Canada's ability to address climate change. The 2011 main estimates show a 20% cut to Environment Canada, including a 59% reduction in spending for climate change and clean air.

The second report was our national inventory report to the UN about where our emissions come from. Nowhere in here can we find where our emissions are or what kind of emissions we have with regard to the oil sands. In this report, emissions from the oil sands were not explicitly listed, but if we looked hard enough we could find them. We could figure it out and we could see the data showing that there is a 20% increase in oil sands emissions in 2009 alone. No

Adjournment Proceedings

wonder it is not specifically listed. No wonder it is hidden. As I pointed out earlier in the House, that amount is actually more than the emissions of every single car in Canada.

I would like to know, who made the decision to try to hide this very important information on greenhouse gas emissions from the oil sands productions?

● (1915)

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member opposite on her election and her appointment to the environment file. I look forward to working with her in the future.

First, it is important to note with regard to the government's plan for climate change that Canadians actually had an opportunity to consider the NDP's climate change platform in the last month, during our election, and it was soundly rejected. Our plan, the best plan for it, is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions sector by sector, aligning with the U.S. where appropriate.

With regard to our reporting requirements, our government has been compliant with our international reporting guidelines in this area. That is why this year has been no exception. We have met our reporting deadlines and Canada has not once been found to be out of compliance for finalizing our submissions.

The UNFCCC report that the member referred to and the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act are two different reporting mechanisms with which our government was compliant, posting our UNFCCC response within the allowable grace period, and we were in compliance.

Our government is taking strong action on climate change. We have a clear plan to meet our committed Copenhagen accord in a sector by sector approach which is well underway. What is really important to note is that our plan is to partner with industry in developing regulations to reduce GHG emissions without jeopardizing the fragile economy as it recovers from our recent economic downturn.

Canadians elected our government because they know our path is the right one, going forward on climate change. Our plan is also not reliant on industry alone. Our government is taking action on mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change, including important investments in climate science.

I look forward to working with the member opposite to work constructively with our government as we move forward toward meeting our Copenhagen targets.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Madam Speaker, as it is the first time I have had the opportunity to hear my colleague in the House, congratulations to her on her election and also for her appointment as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment.

Adjournment Proceedings

The report shows clearly that sector by sector is absolutely not working. This is not a plan for climate change. The Conservatives have a plan and it is not working. The information in this report was hidden. Emissions from the oil sands went up, and to top it off, we were late in reporting. After a tsunami and earthquake, Japan managed to report on time and we did not. It is unbelievable.

Considering the dismal failure for us in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and the fact that we cannot even get a report together that makes sense and where we can find clear information, how can we possibly trust the government to take its climate change obligations seriously?

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Madam Speaker, it is important to note that there was no hidden report. The breakdown in emissions originating from the oil sands sector in 2009 is captured in several categories, including fossil fuel production and refining, mining and oil, gas extraction and fugitive sources. It is in the report.

I want to emphasize that we have a very strong plan going forward. Our government has a strong plan to ensure both environmental sustainability and economic sustainability.

Through consultation with industry and other levels of government, we will continue to regulate all major sources of emissions within that context of balancing environmental sustainability with economic sustainability.

SENIORS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for taking the time to respond to questions on the very important matter of funding decisions regarding seniors and the poverty that is the reality of life for far too many older Canadians.

On June 7, I asked the Minister of Finance to explain why the government chose corporate tax giveaways over raising every senior in this country out of poverty, opting to give the poorest seniors a mere \$50 a month in guaranteed income supplement increases. The parliamentary secretary for the minister responded that seniors expected this increase, that she hoped I would support it and that she wanted to address the needs of seniors.

I have no doubt that seniors will appreciate this modest increase in GIS. When one lives in poverty, every extra dollar eases the heavy burden of trying to manage.

However, the needs of our country's seniors are not being met and will not be met by this miserly increase in the GIS. Though this raise may in some small way help our seniors meet the increasing costs of living, it will not raise them out of poverty. Ending poverty must be the goal of any government that claims to have the best interests of its citizens at heart.

A quarter of a million of Canada's seniors live below the poverty line. They struggle to afford basics like food, housing and prescription medication. After spending their lives working to build our country, we have failed them by not providing for them as they once provided for us.

It is not as though the government has not had the opportunity to make changes in the lives of our seniors. The government found \$668 million in the budget for the G8 summit, billions for corporate

tax giveaways and \$50 million for perks, such as the gazebo in a minister's riding, but it strangely was unable to find \$700 million to raise every senior in Canada above the poverty line.

It would seem that the government refuses to prioritize the needs of our seniors over other more corporate or personal interests.

My question is straightforward. If the government truly wants to address the needs of seniors, why has it so far refused to take every opportunity to take the necessary actions to raise all seniors out of poverty?

● (1920)

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, our Conservative government recognizes that Canada's seniors helped build our amazing country. Many of those seniors actually live in my riding of Simcoe—Grey.

That is why the next phase of Canada's economic action plan introduces key measures to improve the quality of life and expand opportunities for Canada's seniors.

Some of these initiatives include enhancing the government income supplement, GIS, for low-income seniors with increased benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This is an initiative the Canadian Association of Retired Persons has said that it was, "very happy to see....this issue has been an issue that we have raised many times before and it is finally something that is being addressed".

Also included in these initiatives are: enhancing the new horizons for seniors program with an additional \$10 million to promote volunteerism, mentorship and expanded awareness of elder abuse; extending the targeted initiative for older workers with an additional \$50 million; keeping transfer payments to provinces and territories at record highs, ensuring they can provide the health care and social programs seniors depend on; and eliminating the mandatory retirement age for federally regulated employees to give seniors who want to remain active in the workforce the freedom to make that choice, unless there is an occupational requirement.

As the Canadian Taxpayers Federation noted, "People have a right to determine how long they work, and this", eliminating the mandatory retirement age, "is a major step towards eliminating poverty for seniors".

During the recent election, Canadians seniors, especially in my riding of Simcoe—Grey, reviewed the next phase of Canada's economic action plan and what it proposed for them. Canadian seniors gave the Conservative plan a strong endorsement on election day, providing the government with a strong mandate to support seniors. Now is the time to move forward on that plan.

Adjournment Proceedings

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan builds on the over \$2 billion in annual tax relief our Conservative government has provided to seniors since 2006, including: introducing pension income splitting; increasing the age credit amount by \$2,000; doubling the pension income credit to \$2,000; increasing the amount of GIS recipients can earn through employment without any reduction in GIS benefits, from \$500 to \$3,500; increasing the age limit for RRSP to RRIF conversion to 71 from 69; establishing the landmark tax-free savings account, which is particularly beneficial for seniors; and much more.

Indeed, through our strong record of tax relief, over 85,000 seniors have been removed from the tax rolls completely since 2006.

Rest assured, our Conservative government is and will continue to stand up for seniors.

● (1925)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, it is easy for Conservatives to stand in the House of Commons and say that the government has done much to improve the lives of seniors and that there have been many measures introduced to try and ease the economic burden that our seniors carry.

The truth remains, however, that these measures have not been enough and we continue to fail senior citizens. I cannot stress enough that despite the work of the past years, over a quarter of a million of Canada's seniors continue to live in poverty. The small gains in benefits that the government has granted them has not changed this fact.

The government had several opportunities to change that reality, but instead choose to spend money in a frivolous manner. If, for

example, the government had made a few conference calls instead of hosting a \$668 million photo op, every senior in our country could be living above the poverty line right now.

Once again, why did the government refuse to take the opportunity to lift every senior in our country out of poverty?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Madam Speaker, let me reiterate that our Conservative government has been given a strong mandate because of its strong record of supporting Canada's seniors and we will continue to advance their interests in the years ahead.

Indeed, just today, we introduced legislation to implement the enhancement to the guaranteed income supplement promised in budget 2011. Provided this legislation passes in the days ahead, this will provide increased payments to more than 680,000 vulnerable seniors beginning July 1 of this year.

As the C.D. Howe Institute has recently observed:

—the new Guaranteed Income Supplement...top-up benefit for low-income seniors would bring a meaningful increase in benefits too low-income seniors.

I urge all parliamentarians to work with our government to support Canada's most vulnerable seniors.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:27 p.m.)

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House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 146 • NUMBER 009 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 15, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 15, 2011

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

● (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government has invested over \$100 million in infrastructure projects in the cities of Mississauga and Brampton.

As a city councillor for over seven years in Canada's sixth largest city, I led the charge for some of these investments. I can say that this government's help put our neighbours to work and helped cities build infrastructure they could not have built on their own.

Next week, Mississauga is excited to open our vibrant, new downtown square. We are also opening new libraries where children can develop a love of reading with their moms and dads. Soon, our new, modern pools will help keep us fit and the hydrotherapy pool is sure to be a hit with seniors and young moms. I am most proud of the new ambulance station that will provide faster emergency response times.

Canada is coming out stronger than ever from the global economic downturn because of our Conservative government. It invested in communities, gave our neighbours jobs and improved the quality of life with lasting infrastructure projects.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a new member of the 41st Parliament, I would like to thank the people

of Brome—Missisquoi for placing their trust in me. It is time to get to work on the priorities of Brome—Missisquoi.

With respect to Montreal Pipe Line's pump stations, engineers from the National Energy Board have indicated that the company does not have any way of preventing an oil spill outside its facilities.

Inspectors also note that the direction of flow would take the oil straight into watercourses. At least one tributary of the Missisquoi River, which runs through Potton Township, would be affected. We will be following this file closely to ensure that we put the environmental priorities and the health of the people of Brome—Missisquoi ahead of the economic imperatives of major industrial polluters.

* * *

[English]

YORK CENTRE

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and an honour to stand before you in the House today.

I will begin by thanking my dedicated campaign volunteers to whom I owe the most profound gratitude and appreciation. I also thank the voters of York Centre for putting their confidence in me. I promise to work my heart out for all of my constituents.

Like the many residents of York Centre, my father was an immigrant. He survived the Holocaust and came to Canada alone. He came with three things: a number on his arm, the shirt on his back, but, most important, hope in his heart. Canada became his home.

This is why I am so especially proud to represent the people of York Centre, many of whom are immigrants. As a first-generation Canadian, I know their bravery, perseverance and hard work firsthand, but, most important, how they play by the rules. In return, they just want to know that their government will stand up for them when they do.

This government has proven that it is here for all hard-working Canadians. I am so proud to serve under the principled leadership of our Prime Minister. This government will deliver on its commitments and will always stand with hard-working Canadian families.

*Statements by Members***INFRASTRUCTURE**

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about the proposed Kensington and area wellness complex, an initiative in my riding of Malpeque aimed at improving the health and well-being of constituents. This complex would offer centralized facilities, such as a gym, museum, auditorium, day care centre, library, meeting rooms and commercial space, among others. The planners developed an excellent model.

I urge the government to support this initiative by re-establishing programs so that the organizers can secure funding for this project. Being told that ACOA has no programs and, therefore, no money is not an option. This project is vital to the Kensington community but, unfortunately, with the cuts the government is making, it will only remain a dream.

I urge the government to support this initiative and others like it in rural communities so that rural Canada can make the advancements it well deserves.

* * *

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 459

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month, my home town of Stouffville celebrated the opening of a brand new Royal Canadian Legion Branch 459.

The original Legion was built in 1947 by veterans from World War II who came together with veterans from World War I in a common goal to build a place of their own; a place to relive memories, embrace the camaraderie built in their history together and to commemorate the friends they lost.

Building on the past, the new Legion's home contains the cornerstone of the original home embedded in the front entrance to continue the legacy built in 1947.

In the words of Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae:

To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.

The new home for Legion Branch 459 is no disservice to the joy and pain endured by our veterans. We will not forget history and we will not forget the bonds our veterans built. We will continue to build them into our future.

I congratulate Branch 459, its president, Murray Pattendon, and thank my entire hometown for its efforts in recognizing so many people who have sacrificed so much to help make this country the best place to live and work.

* * *

● (1410)

*[Translation]***HEALTH**

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all hon. members of this 41st Parliament on their election.

I would first like to recognize the contributions made by my mother, my family and my volunteers. I would also like to say a

special thank you to my constituents, the people of Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, for placing their trust in me.

People voted for change and I promise to deliver. Quebecers and Canadians have clearly indicated that health care is a priority.

They want everyone to have access to a family doctor and they want wait times to go down.

It is time for this government to take concrete action on the priorities of Canadians and show some real leadership in health care.

* * *

*[English]***HONOURS**

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first statement in the House, I congratulate you on your new role.

I thank the constituents of London North Centre for giving me the privilege of serving them as their member of Parliament. It is an honour to be here. I also thank my campaign team, the dedicated volunteers who put in countless hours, and my family for standing by me as I hit the pavement on the campaign trail. Without them I would not be here.

Today in my riding, the city of London will be honouring Londoners who are recipients of the Order of Canada and the Order of Ontario. They are: Order of Canada recipient, Hanny Hassan; and Order of Ontario recipients, Dr. Joseph Chin, Gerald Fagan, Elizabeth Hillman Waterston and Professor Gordon McBean.

On behalf of the members of this House, I congratulate the recipients for making me proud and for making London proud.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a Boston hedge fund wants to come up to Canada and destroy 2,500 acres of prime farmland and natural habitat in Dufferin county by creating one of the largest open pit mines in Canada.

This megaquarry would stretch three miles across and plunge 200 feet deep, a drop bigger than Niagara Falls. It would impact the Nottawasaga and Grand River watersheds that provide drinking water for one million Ontario residents. It would pump 600 million litres of water a day. That is almost the same amount of water used by almost 20% of Ontario residents.

The Suzuki Foundation and local conservation authorities have expressed concern.

This is an environmental disaster in the making. We need a federal environmental assessment. We also need a federal panel to review the environmental effects on the transboundary waters of Lake Huron and Lake Erie.

These American hedge funds destroyed Wall Street three years ago. Now they want to come to Canada and destroy a beautiful piece of southwestern Ontario. They must be stopped.

[Translation]

SAINT-LAMBERT

Mrs. Sadia Groguié (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to speak for the first time in the House on behalf of the people of Saint-Lambert.

To begin, I would like to thank my constituents for the confidence they placed in me. I want to reiterate my promise to them that I will fight tirelessly for their interests. I would also like to thank my husband, my children and all of the volunteers, as well as my mother, who has always been a source of inspiration for me.

I humbly accept the mandate that my constituents have given me. I accept the mandate to stand up for our families and our youth, and to provide our seniors with the opportunity for a decent life.

I would like to thank our leader for the trust he placed in my by appointing me deputy critic for citizenship and immigration. It is an honour and a privilege.

I am determined to work with the members of the House, the Quebec government and stakeholders for a fair, compassionate, transparent and efficient immigration system.

• (1415)

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government did what we said we would do with the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

Our government is focused on what matters to Canadians, jobs and the economy. To complete our recovery, we must implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low-tax plan for jobs and growth.

Canada's economy has grown now for seven straight quarters, with nearly 560,000 new jobs created since July 2009. While that is positive news, too many Canadians are still looking for work and the global economic recovery remains fragile.

Canadians gave us a mandate to stay focused on the economy and pass measures aimed at strengthening both our economic recovery and our country. We will follow through on these commitments.

[Translation]

YOUNG CANADIANS

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House today to make my first statement as the youngest member of Parliament in the history of Canada.

Statements by Members

The first thing I want to do, of course, is to thank the people of my riding for their trust in me. It is an honour for me to represent them in the House.

I am here to speak on behalf of all the people in my riding, and also on behalf of all young people across the country. I received congratulatory messages from hundreds of young Canadians who were inspired by my election, and I plan to work tirelessly to show that we young people have a place in public debate and that we can achieve very good results.

May 2 was a great day for all young Canadians. Since the election, they can count on a strong voice made up of several members who truly understand their reality.

It is finally time to show that every Canadian, regardless of origin, gender, occupation or age, has a place in this important political institution.

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government says what it is going to do and then follows through, as demonstrated by the next phase of the economic action plan. We are continuing to move forward with the economic recovery and we are keeping our promises. Families will benefit from new tax credits to promote arts and physical activities. We will help the regions attract doctors and we will give volunteer firefighters the credit they deserve. Furthermore, we will accomplish all this without increasing personal income taxes. The economy remains fragile and the recent budget will bolster and complete the economic recovery.

Under this Conservative government, Canada has been a leader in economic recovery and job creation. We invite all parties to help Canada continue to lead the way by voting for our budget.

DAVID COLMAN

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to express our condolences on the passing of David Colman, the Director of the Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital at McGill University.

[English]

Dr. Colman had a distinguished career as a research scientist, professor and clinician. Under his leadership, the world-famous Montreal Neurological Institute was one of the first to be recognized as a national centre of excellence in research and commercialization.

[Translation]

Dr. Colman initiated a campaign to develop new technologies that have changed the way diseases of the brain are treated. It is due to his contribution that the Institute is becoming a world leader in brain imaging, neuro-engineering and palliative care.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Canada attracts top talent in neuroscience research and treatment, thanks to the vision and dedication of David Colman and his team.

I stand in the House today to acknowledge his immense contribution to science and medicine and to pay respects to his family and colleagues.

* * *

TRADE AND TOURISM

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government received a strong mandate from Canadians to focus on completing the economic recovery. That is why we are focused on creating jobs and economic growth through expanding trade and tourism.

Today, we welcome the inaugural China Southern Airlines flight between Vancouver and Guangzhou, China, one of the fastest-growing regions in China and in the world. This new direct service is made possible by the current Canada–China air transport agreement, negotiated and signed by our government. China, as a global and bilateral partner, is important to Canada and we are engaged in a frank, friendly and forward-looking relationship with China.

This new service, combined with Canada's approved destination status, will give more options to Chinese tourists to visit British Columbia and the rest of Canada. It also further strengthens the Canada's Asia Pacific Gateway and will provide Canadians more choices for international travel to China.

Our government will continue to seek out opportunities to expand trade and tourism with countries around the world.

* * *

● (1420)

JORDAN FRAM AND JASON CHENIER

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to two miners who lost their lives last week in an accident at the Stobie Mine in Sudbury. Jordan Fram, age 26, was a 6-year veteran of the mines and 35-year-old Jason Chenier had 11 years of experience when they perished on June 8 while working 3,000 feet underground.

This devastating loss has saddened the entire community and resulted in nine stop-work orders issued against Vale by the Ontario Ministry of Labour, due in part to worrisome levels of water in the mine. This tragedy is a stark reminder that mining remains a dangerous profession and that we must learn from this tragedy to ensure it does not happen again. These men's lives were cut short, leaving behind grieving families, colleagues and communities in a desperate search for answers.

On behalf of all members of the House, I extend my heartfelt sympathies to their loved ones and colleagues. May they rest in peace.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP of the radical hard left do not know the first thing about governing. Ask a British Columbian or Ontarian who had to put up with its members in power.

While Canadians remain concerned about jobs and the economy, the NDP is having a gut-wrenching debate about whether or not it should remain committed to its reckless, hard left, high tax, socialist principles.

The NDP radical left remains committed to pro-drug policies and anti-trade policies. The NDP opposes Canada's leadership as a clean energy superpower. It even questions its commitment to federalism, with calls to repeal the Clarity Act.

The NDP proposed child care from birth to age 12, a 45-day work year and a 50% hike in the pension plan, policies that would cost billions.

The radical hard left NDPers should stop and think about the real priorities of Canadians: jobs and the economy.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[Translation]***EMPLOYMENT**

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the economy and job creation depend on four key factors: consumption, exports, investment and the government. Canadian household debt is far too high. Canadians are at a breaking point. Exports are declining. Corporations are no longer reinvesting because the tax cuts they are getting from the Conservatives are nothing but bonuses for senior management. The ball is in the government's court.

When will there be a real strategy for growth and job creation for our workers and our Canadians?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has the best job creation record in the industrialized world. We are currently seeing a private sector-led recovery. Obviously, the budget passed by this Parliament will help us continue this recovery.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the facts run counter to what the Prime Minister is saying.

Since the Conservatives came to power, the fact is we have lost hundreds of thousands of good paying manufacturing jobs. The latest data from Statistics Canada today confirms that the bleeding continues. Manufacturing, in particular, and the auto and aerospace industries are losing thousands of jobs.

When are we going to realize that the policies are creating low wage part-time jobs and killing the balanced economy that we have been building in our country since the Second World War?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian economy has created over 550,000 jobs since the recession. Those jobs have been focused in the private sector and on high paying jobs. Those are the facts. Obviously we would like to see more and that is why we passed the budget.

The leader of the NDP said earlier that we could not create jobs through consumption, or investment or through exports, that we had to do it through government. On this side, we are aiming to have a private sector-led recovery.

• (1425)

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government does not have a plan to create jobs then. That is quite clear. Its only strategy is to prevent working people from the right to bargain. Labour disputes should be dealt with fairly at the bargaining table.

First, the government threatens back to work legislation mere hours after Air Canada workers used their legitimate right to strike. Then it turns around, takes a government corporation and locks out its own workers, preventing Canadians from getting their mail.

Does the Prime Minister consider that this could in any way be interpreted as fair bargaining practice?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the two parties in both the Air Canada dispute and the Canada Post dispute have thus far been unable to reach a settlement. Due to their inability to reach a settlement, they are threatening greater damage on other parties in the Canadian economy. That is not acceptable to the government.

This government will act to ensure that the Canadian economy and the wider interests of the Canadian public are protected.

* * *

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post suddenly locked out all postal workers late last night. Is this bargaining in good faith?

The lockout is unnecessary. The union offered to suspend its strikes and work under the old contract during negotiations.

What is the minister doing to ensure Canada Post negotiates fairly? Is she fine with Canada Post manufacturing a crisis so the government can step in with back-to-work legislation?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has just indicated, in this case, Canada Post and the union have been unable to reach a negotiated settlement, which is a great disappointment for us because of the effect it has on Canadians and on the Canadian economy.

As a result, tonight we will be putting on notice legislation to restore mail delivery service for Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR CANADA

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with respect to Air Canada, the Minister of Labour keeps saying that

special legislation is necessary because the Air Canada strike could hinder our economic recovery. She seems to forget that the workers affected by this dispute are also consumers who keep the economy rolling.

Does the Minister of Labour realize that vulnerable workers and people who lose their pensions are not going to help our country's economic recovery?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have two parties at the table who have been trying to negotiate a collective agreement for a very long period of time. They are unable to reach said agreement by themselves, even though they have had ample opportunity to do so, and much support from this government and Labour Canada in terms of reaching an agreement.

Therefore, on behalf of Canadians in general and because we have a strong mandate on this economy to make sure it recovers, we have acted.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have just learned that the Minister of Finance has just given a speech in New York City where, in the middle of a major political debate in the United States, the minister has chosen to side with the Republican fiscal hawks in the United States Congress.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister, since when does the Government of Canada interfere in the domestic political issues in the United States, and since when does his government become a branch plant of the Republican tea party in the United States?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the leader of the Liberal Party is talking about, but I can tell him this. Throughout the global recession and recovery, the leaders of the G20 have been working together to address the global economic situation.

What we do in each of our own countries in this global economy affects us all, and obviously we are working together to ensure a strong global recovery.

* * *

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Speaking of double standards, Mr. Speaker, we now have another one.

The Prime Minister is constantly saying that those of us who quote the Auditor General are not telling the truth. So let me simply quote the Auditor General very directly with respect to the activities of the President of the Treasury Board and ask him one simple question.

The interim Auditor General said that he found what the government did unusual and troubling. I would like to ask the Prime Minister, is the Auditor General telling the truth when he says those words?

Oral Questions

● (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the government has said before, we have looked at the Auditor General's report in its entirety. It does make some interesting recommendations and observations. The government has made it very clear that it will take those into account in the future and act on those recommendations.

* * *

*[Translation]***LABOUR RELATIONS**

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the third example of the government's double standard is the situation we are in with Air Canada and Canada Post. With Air Canada, it is clear that a legal strike started yesterday. Services are still being offered, but the government is in the process of introducing a bill to put an end to the strike. As for Canada Post, the government is very slow to react on behalf of the workers who have been locked out and on behalf of consumers.

Why this double standard?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so far, with both Air Canada and Canada Post, the parties have been unable to reach an agreement. This could cause serious damage to the Canadian economy and to a large part of the population. This government will take action to protect the best interests of the Canadian economy and the Canadian people.

* * *

POVERTY

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, some numbers released today reveal that poverty in this country remains at an unacceptable level. One in ten Canadians lives in poverty. That includes nearly 700,000 children. While this government is building gazeboes, middle-class incomes remain stagnant and poverty levels are increasing.

When will the minister realize the seriousness of Canada's poverty issue?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, one of the effects of the global recession has been an increase in poverty here in Canada. However, our economic action plan was there to fight poverty. We believe that the best way to fight poverty is to create jobs. That is why we have invested unprecedented amounts of money in training people so they can acquire skills and find work.

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 634,000 children are living in poverty, and poverty, as the minister has just said, has been on the rise since the Conservatives took power. Too many have to rely on EI to get by, benefits are running out, and people still cannot find full-time jobs to replace the ones they have lost.

How can the government continue to hand out huge tax breaks to profitable banks and oil companies while ignoring Canadian families living in poverty?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP's concern for poverty is a little late in coming.

During the economic action plan, it was our government that tried to help those who were unfortunate enough to lose their jobs through no fault of their own by adding an additional five weeks and by making benefits available to the self-employed. We also provided unprecedented funding for training to help these people get the skills they needed for the jobs of the future.

Unfortunately, the NDP voted against every one of those initiatives to help lift these people out of poverty.

* * *

*[Translation]***BUDGET CUTS**

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has begun announcing staff cutbacks in many departments including HRSDC, Canadian Heritage and Environment Canada.

It appears that these cuts have been made arbitrarily and that the government is no longer even trying to justify its actions to Canadians. The government really seems to be making things up as it goes along.

Can the President of the Treasury Board explain the logic behind these cuts—that is, if there is any logic involved?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is referring to the report of the Parliamentary Budget Officer which takes a look at part of our plans to ensure that we live within our means as departments, but it does not paint the full picture.

Our plans are on stream. We are looking at rationalizing some services, but also delivering those services to taxpayers in a better way. That is our promise to taxpayers. That was what we ran on during the most recent election campaign and we have a strong mandate to do so.

* * *

● (1435)

*[Translation]***G8 SUMMIT**

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, now that we know that the President of the Treasury Board is able to stand, I would like to give him a third opportunity to tell Canadians about his use of the border infrastructure fund for projects in his riding, which is 300 kilometres from the border.

Oral Questions

How can the President of the Treasury Board tell Canadians that he is going to cut their services when he himself is responsible for wasting \$50 million of taxpayers' money?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to this issue before.

There were 32 infrastructure projects that went forward, including resurfacing a runway at the airport in North Bay, repaving a provincial highway, and building a community centre. All of those projects came in on time. All of those projects came in under budget.

The Auditor General raised some legitimate concerns and observations about how the government could do a better job and this government has accepted those recommendations.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when Canadians pay their taxes, they expect that their hard-earned dollars are going to be treated with respect. If we look at how the President of the Treasury blew through \$50 million on glow sticks and gazebos, it is as if the three amigos, the mayor, the hotel manager and the minister, stuffed the largest porcine pinata ever conceived and then whacked all those baubles and booty over the hills of Muskoka.

When will the minister apologize for this abuse of the public trust?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest when the new Leader of the Opposition said that he was going to come to the House of Commons and raise the level of debate. I am very disappointed by the comments made by the member opposite.

With respect to the legacy fund, there were 32 infrastructure projects. They were all public infrastructure projects similar to projects done right across the country from coast to coast to coast. Every single dollar was accounted for. All the projects are now in the hands of municipalities, airport authorities, or provincial governments, and all providing good value for taxpayers.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP would certainly like to raise the level of debate, but to do that we would have to raise up somebody from the dead. He seems to be either hiding in the doghouse or he was put in the doghouse since he got whacked by the Auditor General.

When Chuck Guité played around with public funds for partisan gain, he got sent to jail. When the minister from Muskoka played around with public funds for partisan gain, he got the keys to the Treasury Board. What kind of message does this send to Canadians?

When will this minister stand up in the House and be accountable for his misrepresentation of public funds?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that, I deeply regret to say, was slanderous and character assassination. I expected better from the New Democratic Party.

* * *

G20 SUMMIT

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a year later and Toronto is still waiting for the government to accept full responsibility for the fallout of the G20 mess. Some Toronto

councillors are pushing for long-term solutions, but the immediate financial needs still require action. Last week, New Democrats met, for example, with the owner of the Horseshoe Tavern which is one of the businesses still waiting for compensation.

When will the government stop stonewalling, treat Toronto with respect, and get their compensation out the door quickly?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has always treated the city of Toronto with respect, and let me tell members that on May 2 the people of Toronto showed their support and their respect for this government. Not only did we sweep the GTA with all but one, but we won the most seats in the city of Toronto.

I said to the member opposite when he asked this question last week, and I said to my friend from Parkdale—High Park, if there is any business, and the member provided the name of one, that is awaiting compensation, give it to me, I will be very happy to ensure that it is rectified as quickly as possible.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives rewarded their friends in Muskoka, no applications were required, no documentation was needed. However, in Toronto, they piled on paperwork and told Toronto businesses that they have to go into a process that is slow, bureaucratic, unfair and opaque, and then dismissed most of the claims or insulted them with a tiny amount.

What did Toronto businesses do to deserve such poor and shabby treatment?

• (1440)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if there are any businesses in the city of Toronto that are waiting for compensation, as I said last week, and I will say again, I got the name of one from the member for Davenport, and if the member for Trinity—Spadina knows of any businesses that are awaiting a response, I understand there are four or five yet to be determined, we would be very happy to move as expeditiously as possible.

I can say this. Boy, oh, boy, in the last 30 years, the people in Toronto elected the best crop of MPs that we have seen in that city in a long time.

* * *

BORDER INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during tourist season in northwestern Ontario, visitors can wait more than three hours to cross the border.

For our communities, tourism is a key part of the economy. Yet, the government diverted \$50 million from the border infrastructure fund to beautify communities in the minister's riding, using the fund as a private wish list, while ignoring border regions like northwestern Ontario.

Oral Questions

Is the President of the Treasury Board finally ready to apologize?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to correct the record. No such funds were diverted. We used the existing authorities in this fund to provide support under three specific categories.

The Auditor General has raised some legitimate concerns about the transparency and the clarity to the House of Commons in the approving of those estimates, and we have fully accepted her advice.

However, I am very pleased to clarify that not a single dollar was moved that otherwise would have been spent on border infrastructure for this project. So, I know he will be very pleased with that.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans wants us to believe that the closure of maritime search and rescue centres in St. John's and Quebec City will not affect lifesaving services.

However, yesterday, Winston Pitcher, the head of the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary in Newfoundland and Labrador, told the Prime Minister that these closures could delay rescues and put public safety at risk.

Where are the government's priorities? It makes massive increases to its own offices while cutting lifesaving rescue centres.

When will the minister admit a mistake has been made and start listening to search and rescue experts?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has been clear about finding efficiencies and aligning our resources, but we are absolutely not putting the lives of Canadians at risk. Our top priority will continue to be the safety and security of all Canadians.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, regarding the closure of the search and rescue centre in Newfoundland and Labrador, here is a quote: "A call centre? I am offended because it diminishes my role and the essential work that we do for human safety." Who said that? It was Merv Wiseman, maritime search and rescue coordinator and a former Conservative candidate.

Here is another quote:

The closure may have saved the Liberal government a few dollars, but Newfoundland and Labrador have had to suffer the consequences.

Who said that? The Prime Minister.

Will the regional minister for Newfoundland and Labrador, that is right, the member of Parliament for Labrador, rise in this House, finally, and condemn these cuts?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is from a fine source, the former Liberal government that decimated the Canadian Coast Guard through its neglect.

Since 2006, our government has made unprecedented investments in the protection of Canadians to the tune of \$1.4 billion invested in fleet renewal. In Newfoundland and Labrador, there has been a 33% increase in Canadian Coast Guard positions since we came to office. We have also relocated two of Canada's heaviest and most capable icebreakers, the *Terry Fox* and the *Louis S. St-Laurent*.

VETERANS

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 93-year old retired Major Gordon MacLean Logan, who was wounded six times during World War II, dedicated his life to serving Canadians.

For the past three years, he has had to pull teeth to speak to his Veterans Affairs case worker, thanks to a lack of resources. Is this how the Conservative government honours our veterans?

While Mr. Logan's health is failing, government advertising has exploded by 215%.

Can the minister please explain to Mr. Logan and his family how partisan overspending is helping him live with dignity?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has raised an important issue.

We on this side of the House, and I hope on all sides of the House, care for the well-being of all of our veterans. This is why we have invested and keep investing in the health of our veterans, whether it be their mental or physical health.

We will keep on investing and will take care of all of our veterans here, today and tomorrow.

• (1445)

[Translation]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for months the government has been dragging its feet on the issue of foreign investment. In the meantime, the list of foreign companies that are renegeing on their commitments through layoffs continues to grow: Vale Inco, Stelco and now Custom House in Victoria. We need new regulations governing foreign investment to determine whether takeovers are truly in the public interest and to determine what guarantees are required.

Will the minister develop these new regulations before—yes, before—deciding who the Toronto Stock Exchange will be sold to?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been clear on this side of the House. We want to promote increased competition. Studying foreign investments is essential. We want to give consumers more choice. The hon. member is trying to mix different issues and muddy the waters. One thing is clear: we will continue to move forward with our policies in order to safeguard the economy and ensure that the economic recovery takes solid hold once and for all.

*Oral Questions***SYRIA***[English]*

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is not an answer. The truth is that only two out of 13,500 takeovers have been blocked since Investment Canada was created. The takeovers of Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan and MacDonald Dettwiler were only stopped after the NDP held the government to account for its lack of transparency. We did the heavy lifting.

Now the minister has moved the deadline of the TMX takeover review into the summer when Parliament is not in session.

Will the government commit to acting now to establish a transparent public review of the Toronto Stock Exchange takeover bid?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, foreign investment is key to the growth of the Canadian economy and our government will continue to encourage it.

We believe in a strong economy. That being said, significant investments will continue to be reviewable under the Investment Canada Act, and always as a net benefit for Canada.

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*[Translation]***HATE CRIMES**

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the latest statistics show an increase of 18% in hate crimes against the gay and lesbian community. While most other hate crimes are committed mainly against property, over half of those committed against gays and lesbians involve violence. This is unacceptable.

What measures does the government intend to take to combat the increase in hate crimes against gays and lesbians?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's track record is clear. We believe strongly in protecting the rights of all Canadians regardless of their background, regardless of their roots. That continues to be the position of our government.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sadly and unjustly, transgender Canadians are still not protected against hate crimes nor are they protected against discrimination under the Canadian Human Rights Code.

In its last session, this House passed legislation to provide those protections, legislation that was supported by the Minister of Justice.

This is a question of equality for Canadians who are our brothers and sisters, our daughters, our sons, our neighbours and our friends. Will this government act now to protect the rights and safety of transgender Canadians?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I already indicated to this House, the commitment of this government to the equality of all Canadians remains as firm as it has always been. That continues to be our position and will be in the future.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is impossible to ignore the current unrest in Syria and the plight of its people.

As we speak, innocent civilians who have been protesting peacefully are being arbitrarily arrested, tortured and in some cases even killed by the Assad regime.

Would the Minister of Foreign Affairs please update the House on the Conservative government's latest steps to further support the Syrian people?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to note that today I have asked our Canadian delegation to the United Nations Human Rights Council to introduce and seek the support of like-minded nations to condemn the actions of the Assad regime in Syria as a gross violation of human rights.

The Government of Canada, and I believe all parties in this place, calls on the Syrian regime to immediately end the killing, the arbitrary arrests, the torture and other acts of violence against its people. We also call on the Assad regime to stop trying to divert domestic and international attention from its brutal crackdown on peaceful, democratic demonstrations.

The situation in Syria is completely unacceptable, and Canada will continue to show its support for people seeking freedom in Syria.

* * *

• (1450)

*[Translation]***TRANSPORTATION**

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the partial closure of the Mercier Bridge announced yesterday is yet another blow to the people of the south shore. Wait times will be interminable. During the 2008 election, Montreal was promised bridges. In 2011, more promises were made. What has been done? Nothing. Where is the plan? When will the bridge be repaired?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member likely knows, ownership of this bridge is shared 50-50 between the Government of Quebec and the federal government. Since our government took office in 2006, we have invested \$135 million in repairing the federal government's share of the Mercier Bridge and in continuing the work. As with all bridges in Montreal, we will continue to ensure that the Mercier Bridge is safe, and all options are on the table to keep the area safe.

Oral Questions

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the summer is going to be very hot, and major traffic jams are expected to affect the entire greater metropolitan area. The minister has made vague promises about a long-term infrastructure plan. The government's inaction over the past six years has led us to the crisis we are experiencing today.

When will the federal government understand that Montreal's entire economy is at stake?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has just answered her own question. If there are traffic jams, it is because there is work being done. If work is being done, it is because we have carried out 28,000 projects across the country under the Prime Minister's economic action plan.

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, young Canadians are facing a tough summer.

The unemployment rate for young Canadians stands at 15%, and it has been getting worse. That is double the general rate. This means that university students will be forced to take out more loans and new grads will not find that critical first job.

The government's approach to youth employment has clearly failed. Where is the minister's plan to help young Canadians find work?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do want to help students get prepared, not just for summer jobs but also for their careers in the long term.

That is why I was very pleased to announce last week the launch of Canada's summer jobs program for this summer with an additional \$10 million in permanent funding. That is an additional 3,500 jobs for students each and every year going forward.

These funds will help them get the jobs they need to get experience, and also help pay for their studies going forward so they will not have to go as far into debt.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government obviously does not understand the extent of the problem of the lack of jobs for the youth of this country. With an unemployment rate of 15% for youth between the ages of 20 and 25, all those who need summer jobs to pay for their education are worried. Not only do our young people go into a great deal of debt to attend school, but, increasingly, they are finding only insecure and poorly paid jobs.

What does this government intend to do to reduce youth unemployment?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, we want to help these young people, these students, acquire experience and skills, not

just during the summer but also as part of a long-term career. That is why we have just announced a very large amount of money that will result in the creation of 3,600 additional student jobs this summer in order to help young people obtain experience and earn money to continue their post-secondary education.

[English]

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the agriculture minister has declared that the Wheat Board will be transformed, without disclosing his new model. The \$5.1 billion wheat industry relies on the strength of the Wheat Board in negotiations for the sale of wheat, the procurement of contracts for railcars and the funding of agricultural research.

With the future of the Wheat Board undefined, the minister has placed our western farmers in a weak negotiating position, and farmers are at risk of incurring huge losses. Will the minister explain what his new board model will look like, how it will be implemented and whether it will continue to be supported by government guaranties?

• (1455)

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Of course, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House want to ensure that the Wheat Board has the ability to move forward, not in a single desk way but in a way that is open and accountable to the farmers it serves, very similar to the operation we see in Ontario.

I would like to cite Keith Degenhardt from the Western Grains Research Foundation, as the member opposite brought up how we do the check-off. Mr. Degenhardt says that the Canadian Wheat Board method of collecting the check-off is certainly not the only method of collecting wheat and barley check-offs.

They look forward to working with us.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, skip the quote and have the plebiscite. That is what the farmers in the Prairies want to see.

The government has demonstrated that it does not care what the prairie farmer has to say, as the Prime Minister himself has decided to get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board.

At what cost? Producer car-loading rights will be destroyed, the Port of Churchill will be devastated, hundreds of good-quality jobs will be lost in Winnipeg.

Why is the government destroying the Canadian Wheat Board and tell us why the farmers will not be allowed to have a vote? Why no plebiscite for prairie farmers?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, western Canadian farmers have been inundated with advice from Ontario members and members from downtown Winnipeg, but what they do is listen to their own.

This is what a farmer from Manitoba, the vice-president of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association, said:

—this change is all about improving the bottom line for farmers, restoring our property rights and creating greater prosperity throughout the prairies—

Ending the CWB monopoly creates the opportunity to reverse that trend and encourage much-needed investment in the wheat and barley industry throughout western Canada, including Winnipeg.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is well aware that children in Canada are at risk to the improper use of medications, because Health Canada does not require drug companies to disclose information on drug effects on children. It seems astounding that Health Canada would allow this to happen.

Drug safety is a huge public concern, so why is the minister not aggressively protecting the health of children and all Canadians with strict regulations for drug safety?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member and all Canadians that we have one of the safest drug approval systems in the world. We have made significant investments in the Drug Safety and Effectiveness Network. As well, our government also created MedEffect Canada, a one-stop resource for health product safety information and adverse reaction reporting.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think the parliamentary secretary should get up to speed, because the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* certainly does not seem to think the government has addressed this issue in any adequate way. In both the U.S. and Europe, regulatory and legislative changes ensure drug testing and disclosure on the effects of medications on children, but Canada lags far behind.

Will the minister commit today to regulations that require full disclosure by drug companies so that children are not at risk when they are taking their medications?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member and Canadians that we are up to speed. We encourage manufacturers to submit pediatric information and to introduce an additional six-month data protection for drugs if they are filed for pediatric indication. In addition, our government created an independent pediatric expert advisory committee to provide advice on the development, licensing and vigilance of products.

* * *

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION LEGISLATION

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while Canada has seen over 560,000 net new jobs created since July 2009 and seven straight quarters of economic growth, too many Canadians unfortunately are still looking for work and the global economic recovery remains fragile. That is why we need to stay the course and move forward with the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

Indeed, our Conservative government did that today with the introduction of the supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy act.

Oral Questions

Could the Minister of State for Finance please inform the House why swift passage of this legislation is critical for Canada—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of State for Finance.

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that question reminds us that there are 680,000 Canadians who are now waiting for the July 1 deadline or they will not get this top-up for their GIS. We need quick movement through the House for this legislation. These seniors worked hard throughout their lives to support our economy. The least we can do, as members of Parliament, is to move this through quickly so that we meet the deadline we set of July 1.

* * *

● (1500)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday when we asked the minister of state about the case of Henk Tepper, a New Brunswick potato farmer imprisoned for almost three months in Lebanon as a result of a commercial dispute in Algeria, the minister gave us a narrow technical answer about consular services offered to Mr. Tepper.

Mr. Tepper's wife and children want to ask the minister why she has not personally intervened with her counterpart in Lebanon to ask for Mr. Tepper's safe return to Canada. Why the refusal to use political means with the government of Lebanon to have this Canadian farmer safely returned to Canada and end the ordeal in Lebanon?

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been many exchanges between Canada's consular services and authorities in Lebanon. However, I think Canadians understand that there is no simple way to transfer a Canadian citizen, who is in the legal process in another country, back to Canada.

Canada would not allow another country to simply say, "Don't deal with one of our citizens in your legal system", and we cannot expect other countries to exempt—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

*Oral Questions***SENIORS**

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is Elder Abuse Prevention Day, a time to recognize the abuse many seniors face in our neighbourhoods. Sadly, too many seniors are being physically, sexually and mentally abused by caregivers and loved ones. This should not be a day just to recognize elder abuse, but a day to take action and protect some of our most vulnerable people.

Could the minister tell the House and the seniors across this country why the government allowed the elder abuse awareness initiative to end on March 31, with nothing in its place to protect seniors in our country?

Hon. Alice Wong (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, any form of abuse is unacceptable. Our government is committed to supporting seniors by combatting elder abuse in all its forms. That is why we have introduced an extensive awareness campaign to take action on this serious issue. We have also committed additional funds in budget 2011 to further support elder abuse awareness.

Our government is taking action to protect vulnerable seniors and we will continue to work hard to do so.

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today Canada joins countries around the world to mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and collectively speak out against all forms of abuse.

I would like to ask the minister of state responsible for seniors what the Government of Canada is doing to combat elder abuse.

Hon. Alice Wong (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, elder abuse is unacceptable and we as Canadians need to take action against it. Our government is doing just that. Building on the momentum of our elder abuse initiative, budget 2011 provides increased funding to further support elder abuse awareness and we intend to move forward on our Speech from the Throne commitments.

No one deserves to be mistreated or exploited and our government will not tolerate it.

* * *

[Translation]

PULP AND PAPER INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at one time the pulp and paper industry was the economic heart of Trois-Rivières.

The Kruger company recently announced almost another hundred local layoffs. In my region, job losses in this sector have been on the rise for years and we fear the bleeding will continue.

What does this government intend to do to help this industry in crisis and when will it take action to protect these jobs in Trois-Rivières?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was a time when all the books we read were printed on paper. Today, most are in an electronic format. There was a time

when the demand for pulp and paper was 50% higher than it is today. We should all get together in 2011 and 2012 to talk about this. To find solutions, we must first identify the problem. Today, it comes down to markets. Unfortunately, we have to look at new products and new markets. Our recent budget provided \$60 million to support research and development for new products, to the satisfaction of the Forest Products Association of Canada.

* * *

• (1505)

LABOUR RELATIONS

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is all well and fine for the Minister of Labour to say she is hoping for negotiated settlements at Canada Post and at Air Canada, but the actions of her government prove the complete opposite. By threatening to introduce special legislation, the Conservatives are sending the crown corporations a clear message: there is no point in negotiating with employees since the federal government will impose back-to-work legislation at the first hint of pressure.

How can the Minister of Labour condone the attitude of her government, which is exacerbating the tensions, as we just saw at the Victoriaville post office back home, unless she too wants to muzzle unionized workers?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, regarding both disputes, we have indicated to the House that in one case we have already put notice on the order paper and in the second we are putting notice on the order paper for back-to-work legislation.

It is not with great pleasure that we do that, because it is a fact that the best deal that can be had is the one that the parties themselves actually reach through their collective bargaining.

However, they have not been able to do that. It is now affecting the Canadian economy and it has effect on third party Canadians who are not part of this dispute but are the ones who are suffering from the hardship.

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday during question period I asked the Minister of the Environment to explain the discrepancy between what the government had told the United Nations and what it told Parliament about Canada's greenhouse gas emissions. The minister responded by saying that oil sand industry contributions of 6.5% were included in the report to the United Nations. That was false.

Knowing what he does now, will the minister now rise, admit his answer yesterday was wrong, correct the record, and—

The Speaker: That is clearly not a point of order. That is a matter for debate. If the member wishes to pursue it, she has opportunities during future question periods. It is certainly not a point of order.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): I want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your election and wish you the best of luck. If you had watched, the member for Winnipeg Centre and I have formed a civility caucus and the member and I are working hard to make your job easier.

Pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, reports entitled "Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan: Quarterly Report to Parliament for the Period of October 1 to December 31, 2010" and "Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan: Quarterly Report to Parliament for the Period of January 1 to March 31, 2011".

TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the overview report of the state of Transportation in Canada 2010, in conformity with the statutory requirements of flying in Section 52 of the Canada Transportation Act.

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two reports on the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas.

The first report is on the delegation's trip to Mexico to the 7th Plenary Assembly. The second report is on an executive meeting that we had in Curitiba, Brazil.

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in

Routine Proceedings

Europe respecting its participation at the tenth winter meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held in Vienna, Austria, February 24-25, 2011.

• (1510)

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation to the second part of the 2011 ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Mission to Poland, the country that will next hold the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union, held in Warsaw, Poland and Strasbourg, France, April 11 to 20, 2011.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe respecting its participation at the election observation mission of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held in Azerbaijan, November 5-8, 2010.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish the co-chair of the civility committee was here to witness this, but I will do my best alone.

I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to its study of the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

I am pleased to report that the committee considered votes under National Defence referred to it and reports the same here today.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to its study of the supplementary estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

I am pleased to report that the committee considered a vote on supplementary estimates (A) under the National Defence referred to it and reports the same.

MAPLE LEAF AND TULIP DAY ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-214, An Act respecting the friendship between Canada and the Netherlands.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House to introduce legislation to make May 5 maple leaf and tulip day. As we all know, there is a tremendous relationship between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Dominion of Canada. We have over 5,700 Canadians buried on Dutch soil.

Routine Proceedings

I am proud to say that the ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Mr. Wim Geerts, is very close by, along with the ambassador to the Hague. They are both here to witness this historic opportunity to make May 5, in continuity, maple leaf and tulip day to show the continuing friendship between the Netherlands and Canada.

There are now one million Canadians of Dutch descent in Canada. We are slowly taking over. As we say, "If you're not Dutch, you're not much".

So, Gouda cheese and Heineken for everyone. Let us hope we pass this bill as quickly as humanly possible.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

CANADIAN FORCES SUPERANNUATION ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-215, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act (deletion of deduction from annuity).

He said: Mr. Speaker, we are trying for the fifth time in the House of Commons to correct a historical wrong.

In 1966, the superannuation plan of members of the armed forces, the RCMP and that of all federal and provincial public servants were blended.

What happens is that when members of the RCMP and military receive either a Canada disability pension or the Canada pension, it is deducted dollar for dollar from their superannuation plan, which leaves many of our heroes in Canada in financial dire straits when they retire or when they become disabled. This is simply wrong. Thousands upon thousands of veterans and their families, RCMP members and their families have asked that this injustice be corrected.

When we introduced this bill in the House of Commons the last time, the Conservatives, unfortunately, defeated it. We are hoping they have had a change of heart over the past election. We are hoping, for the sake of our heroes in this country, that we can correct this historical wrong.

I thank Roger Boutin, Mel Pittman and John Labelle of Lower Sackville for their great efforts, not only for their service to our country but also for the promotion of this important legislation.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

● (1515)

FORMER CANADIAN FORCES MEMBERS ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-216, An Act respecting former Canadian Forces members.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the heroes of our country get quality medical care when they put the uniform on but when that uniform comes off they lose many opportunities to attend, for example, the Stadacona Base and other bases across the country for the medical

care that is there. Thus, they must go to the civilian side and many of them can no longer even find a doctor.

People who have served this country for many years should have access to the high quality medical care that they received when they were in the service. This bill would correct that wrong and allow members of our military and their families the opportunity to access those medical services long after they take the uniform off.

We have an obligation to the heroes of our country, and not just when the uniform is on. We have an obligation to them for the rest of their natural lives. This is the contract we signed with them. They have the unlimited liability when they serve our country. As parliamentarians, we have the ultimate responsibility to see that all their needs are met, especially on this legislation.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-217, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mischief relating to war memorials).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today, on behalf of the residents of my riding of Dufferin—Caledon, to introduce an act to amend the mischief provisions of the Criminal Code relating to war memorials and cenotaphs.

I introduce the bill in an effort to add significant penalties for anyone convicted of mischief against a war memorial, cenotaph or other structure intended to honour or remember those who have died as a result of war. Anyone who intentionally damages or defiles a war memorial should face severe consequences.

Respect for those who have given the ultimate sacrifice so that we may live in peace is the responsibility of every Canadian. We owe it to our men and women in uniform to protect these revered memorials.

I would ask that my colleagues support the bill in an effort to keep our war memorials and cenotaphs sacred.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

CANADA HEALTH ACT

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-218, An Act to amend the Canada Health Act (Autism Spectrum Disorders).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to reintroduce an act to amend the Canada Health Act, the autism spectrum disorder act.

The bill would mandate both ABA and IBI, both treatments for autism, to be included in the Canada Health Act. These treatments have shown to have long-term benefits to persons diagnosed with autism, ultimately improving individuals' quality of life and productivity.

Throughout the country, our treatment system is patchwork at best and it is time the federal government end that and bring forward some really good treatment. It is time that Canada's health system supported the parents and families of persons with autism spectrum disorders and this is the first vital step, which I hope all parties will get behind and support.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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● (1520)

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS ACT

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-219, An Act respecting the establishment of a National Strategy for Autism Spectrum Disorders.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise today to reintroduce a national autism strategy bill. The bill would, among other things, establish national standards for the treatment and delivery of autism-related services and create a system to monitor autism prevalence.

Roughly 1 in 200 Canadians are thought to be diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. I was recently told the story of an individual named Mark by my colleague from Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking. Mark was born with autism. Mark fought against all odds and successfully, I am happy to say, completed two college programs and, this week, graduates from Waterloo University.

Unfortunately, people like Mark are currently the exception to the rule. I hope the swift passage of this legislation will make stories like Mark's more common in the future.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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NATIONAL BRAIN HEALTH EDUCATION AND AWARENESS MONTH ACT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-220, An Act respecting a National Brain Health Education and Awareness Month.

She said: Mr. Speaker, five million Canadians are living with a neurological condition today. The bill would designate the month of March as national brain awareness month in order to help raise awareness about neurological disease and injuries.

Designating the month would educate the people of Canada to enhance their understanding of brain health, including brain diseases, disorders and injuries. It would ensure that brain health research was fully funded and that preventive measures, treatment and support were universally accessible. It would confirm the government's commitment to improving the quality of life of all persons who live with a brain condition and of their families and informal caregivers.

It is my hope that hon. members will support the bill and that the introduction of the bill will help raise awareness of the need for a national brain strategy and lay the foundation for a national strategy to which our party is already committed.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

Routine Proceedings

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SICKLE CELL DISEASE AND THALASSEMIC DISORDERS ACT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-221, An Act respecting a Comprehensive National Strategy for Sickle Cell Disease and Thalassemic Disorders.

She said: Mr. Speaker, my bill, a national strategy for sickle cell disease and thalassemic disorders, addresses the challenges faced by children and adults living with these inherited blood disorders.

The bill calls on the Minister of Health to initiate discussions with the provincial and territorial health ministers to develop comprehensive patient care throughout the life cycle, develop national standards regarding universal screening, develop centres of excellence for both pediatric care and adult care, assess best practices for patients to succeed at school and in the work place, develop information for medical education to prepare health care workers to meet the needs of Canada's diverse populations, develop adequate clinical guidelines and prompt pain management for patients in crisis, establish a program of funding to advocacy groups, and recognize June 19 as sickle cell anemia awareness day in Canada.

I hope all hon. members will support the bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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MILITARY AND VETERAN FAMILIES WEEK ACT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-222, An Act respecting a Military and Veteran Families Week.

She said: Mr. Speaker, our World War II veterans, Korean War veterans, Canadian Forces veterans and all Canadian Forces and reserves deserve more than one week of the year of recognition because of the enormity of their sacrifices. Their loved ones also deserve recognition and support.

My private member's bill calls upon the government to designate a national week for military and veterans families, to honour the families of our military and our veterans, and to acknowledge their sacrifices and their important roles.

Routine Proceedings

It is my hope that designating a national week will encourage all Canadians to have increased recognition of the contributions of military and veterans families, and celebrate their spirit with a week of appropriate activities and ceremonies that pay tribute, support and thank these families, and increase awareness of the sacrifices made by them, particularly among Veterans Affairs Canada and the government.

I hope all hon. members will support the bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

● (1525)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-223, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (gratuities).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to re-introduce this bill which, if passed, will improve the lives and livelihoods of thousands of Canadians with respect to the employment insurance regime.

When restaurant servers apply for EI, their tips are not taken into account in the calculation of the EI payments even though they are included when they pay taxes. So they cannot collect EI on them.

This bill would make it mandatory for servers to claim their tips as income and that EI calculations be based on that total income. This is important because the custom in the restaurant industry is for servers to have low wages on top of which they receive tips. This change would give servers the economic security and equal footing that they deserve by removing the unfair and discriminatory economic disadvantage they face if they lose their jobs.

I would again like to extend my congratulations and thanks to Caitlin Rooney, a constituent of mine from the riding of Halifax who brought this issue to my attention. I would like to thank the member for Berthier—Maskinongé for seconding this bill, as I know she is a passionate advocate for the rights of workers who rely on tips to make ends meet.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

CLIMATE CHANGE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-224, An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be re-tabling, for the third time, the NDP's climate change accountability act.

As everybody knows, the bill would establish a strong plan with firm science-based targets that would address the dangerous climate change resulting from unchecked greenhouse emissions and help improve our tarnished international reputation.

The government's lack of real action on climate change and refusal to take a significant leadership role internationally means that a massive environmental debt will be left for future generations, not just in Canada but globally.

The bill is important because it would provide a touchstone and a rallying point for Canadians concerned about the need for real science-based targets. It would help inform policy-makers about what needs to be done in taking a significant role in addressing climate change.

My New Democrat colleagues and I are committed to advocating for the targets and policies found in the bill and we will work with civil society organizations, activists, policy experts and Canadians to convince the government the time to act is now.

I would also like to thank the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles and the NDP deputy environment critic for seconding the bill and for her willingness to take part in the fight against catastrophic climate change for her constituents and for all Canadians.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

FISHERIES ACT

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-225, An Act to amend the Fisheries Act (closed containment aquaculture).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to re-introduce a bill which aims to strengthen the Fisheries Act by requiring British Columbia fish farms to move from harmful open net pens to safe closed containment systems.

My bill would direct the fisheries minister to develop, table and implement a transition plan to move to closed containment. The plan would also ensure that those currently working in the industry would be protected during this transition.

The people of British Columbia have been clear on this issue. They want to protect wild salmon for generations to come. Thousands of people have signed petitions or postcards urging the federal government to adopt this legislation.

The economic opportunities are real. We have the potential to be leaders in closed containment technology. Amending the Fisheries act and moving to closed containment is a step in the right direction.

I hope all members of the House will join me in supporting the bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

● (1530)

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-226, An Act to change the name of the electoral district of New Westminster—Coquitlam.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to re-introduce an act to change the name of the electoral district New Westminster—Coquitlam. The bill would amend the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act by adding Port Moody to the riding name.

Port Moody is an important part of my riding. Nestled at the east end of Burrard Inlet and surrounded by stunning scenery, Port Moody is a city that has a rich history and is the original terminus for the Canadian Pacific Railway.

When I stand in the House, I want everyone to know who I am representing, and that includes the good people of Port Moody.

I ask my colleagues to pass the bill, as it would mean so much to all those in my riding.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER ACT

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-227, An Act respecting the establishment of a National Strategy for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

He said: Mr. Speaker, my bill asks the Government of Canada to establish a national strategy for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder that includes: the establishment, in co-operation with the provincial governments, of national standards for the treatment of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and the delivery of related services; and the study, in co-operation with the provincial governments, of the funding arrangements for the care of those with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, including the possibility of transferring federal funds to assist the provincial governments in providing treatment, education, professional training and other required supports for Canadians with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE SENIORS AND STRENGTHENING CANADA'S ECONOMY ACT

BILL C-3—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier today in question period there was some discussion of the budget implementation bill's increase in the guaranteed income supplement and how we could ensure that this would be in place by July 1. I have an idea on how we can do it. We have discussed this with the other parties and I believe the other parties are in agreement with the following motion. I move:

Routine Proceedings

That, pursuant to Standing Order 78(1), Bill C-3, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011, be disposed of at all stages as follows:

(a) not more than one sitting day shall be allotted for the consideration at second reading;

(b) if the bill is not reported back by Monday, June 20, 2011, during routine proceedings, it shall be deemed to have been reported from the committee without amendment;

(c) the bill may be taken up at report stage at the next sitting of the House and a motion for third reading may be made immediately after the bill has been concurred in at report stage;

(d) 1.5 hours shall be allotted for the consideration at report stage and third reading; and

(e) that the expiry of the time provided for in this order, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required, for the purpose of this order and, in turn, every question necessary to dispose of the remaining stages of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

● (1535)

PETITIONS

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present petitions signed by hundreds of my constituents regarding the funding of the CBC.

I know a recent report documents that the CBC contributes \$1.3 billion to the Canadian economy every year and has created businesses from coast to coast, from Halifax, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, et cetera.

The petitioners call upon the Parliament of Canada to affirm the importance of the national public broadcaster and to raise the CBC's parliamentary grant from the current level to \$40 per year for every citizen as recently recommended by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage of the House of Commons.

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am submitting this petition on behalf of 163 of my constituents of Jenner, Alberta who want Canada Post to reopen their post office.

I bring their concerns to the House and to the Government of Canada. I am pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

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The residents of Jenner have expressed their concerns that the closure of the post office is like removing the heart from the community.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by many residents of Canada who wish to draw the attention of the Government of Canada to the following.

For the past five years, the Native Women's Association of Canada, NWAC, Sisters in Spirit initiative has worked to identify root causes, trends and circumstances of violence that have led to the disappearance and death of too many aboriginal women and girls.

In March of this year, NWAC released a report entitled "What Their Stories Tell Us", which provided evidence that 582 aboriginal women and girls had gone missing or had been murdered in Canada and that many mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts and grandmothers had been lost to violence in our country. This makes it a pervasive human rights crisis.

The petitioners want the Government of Canada to renew the funding for the Sisters in Spirit initiative phase two, "Evidence to Action", and to invest in an action plan for aboriginal women that NWAC has developed to stop the devastating number of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

We owe it to our sense of justice to make this happen.

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of literally thousands of Canadians from all across Canada who call upon Parliament to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known. In fact, they point out that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial and occupational causes combined and yet they say that Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world. Not only that, they say that Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry, which these signators refer to as corporate welfare for corporate serial killers, and it blocks international efforts to curb its use.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to ban asbestos in all its forms and to institute a just transition program for any asbestos workers laid off. They also call upon the government to end all government subsidies of asbestos, both in Canada and abroad.

Finally, the petitioners call upon the government to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

VISITOR VISAS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I bring forward a petition of individuals who would like the government to deal with the issue of visitor visas and, ultimately, how family members are denied the ability to visit Canada from countries like the Philippines, India and so many countries around the world. They question why it has become so difficult to visit Canada.

It is with pleasure that I table this petition.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1540)

[English]

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE SENIORS AND STRENGTHENING CANADA'S ECONOMY ACT

Hon. Lynne Yelich (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-3, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to begin debate at second reading on the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act. This act would implement key measures from budget 2011, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low tax plan for jobs and growth.

Without a doubt, our government is on the right track for job creation, economic growth and keeping Canada among the best economic positions in the industrialized world. Let us simply look at the facts.

In the first quarter of 2011, Canada's economy grew by 3.9%. This is the largest level of quarterly economic growth in the past year. What is more, Canada has now seen seven consecutive quarters of steady economic growth. Additionally, in May, we once again saw positive job numbers, with over 20,000 net new jobs created. Overall, since July 2009, Canada has created over 560,000 net new jobs, the strongest record of job growth among all the G7 countries. Even better, over 80% of those 560,000-plus net new jobs have been full-time positions.

Similarly, recent findings published in the CIBC Canadian employment quality index have demonstrated:

Not only is the Canadian economy continuing to generate jobs at a healthy pace, but those jobs are gradually getting better....As of April 2011, this measure is roughly back to the pre-recession levels....The improvement in our measure of employment quality reflects a much stronger pace of full-time jobs....

However, there is more. For the third straight year, the World Economic Forum rated our banking system the best and the safest in the world. Also, both the OECD and the IMF have recently forecast Canada's economic growth will be among the strongest in the G7 for both 2011 and 2012.

In the words of the independent Conference Board of Canada:

Canada's economic fundamentals – fiscal policies, tax policy, monetary policy and management of the exchange rate – are arguably in the best shape in the developed world.

Listen to the words of a recent *Toronto Star* editorial, which reflectantly admitted that:

Canada came through the Great Recession comparatively unscathed. As many of our competitors wilted, we rose in stature and relative prosperity.

While all of this is positive news, we must remain cautious and focused on the economy, for we all recognize that too many Canadians are still looking for work and the global economic recovery still remains fragile. Now is the time to stay focused on the economy and on supporting job growth.

That is why we need to stay the course with the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act.

[Translation]

The bill before us today is an important aspect of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, as it implements key measures in the recent federal budget. As hon. members know, budget 2011 addresses the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a plan that seeks to keep taxes low to stimulate economic growth and create jobs. We must ensure that this plan is not derailed.

Under the plan, we will ensure that taxes are kept low. We will make other targeted investments in order to support economic growth and create jobs. We will improve quality of life for seniors, families and children. We will control government spending and we will stay the course in order to eliminate the deficit.

Implementing the next phase of Canada's economic action plan will preserve Canada's advantage in the global economy, strengthen the financial security of workers, seniors and families in Canada and garner the necessary stability to secure our economic recovery in an uncertain world.

• (1545)

[English]

The supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy act contributes to the successful and swift implementation of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan by proposing to legislate into law several of its key measures.

Prominent among such measures include the following: help for vulnerable seniors by enhancing the guaranteed income supplement, also known as the GIS, for seniors who may be at risk of experiencing financial difficulties; support for provincial front line delivery of health care and social programs by extending the temporary total transfer protection to 2011-12, representing nearly \$1 billion in support to affected provinces; encouragement for Canada's young entrepreneurs by providing \$20 million to help the Canadian Youth Business Foundation; enhanced federal assistance for part-time students by reducing the in-study interest rate to zero, bringing them in line with full-time students; improvements to the registered disability savings plan, also known as the RDSP, by increasing flexibility to access RDSP assets for beneficiaries with shortened life expectancies, and ensuring that individuals can appeal in every single case a determination concerning their eligibility for the disability tax credit; support for Canada's veterans by providing

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tax relief for Legion purchases of Remembrance Day poppies and wreaths; support for Canada's leadership in genomics research by providing \$65 million to Genome Canada to launch a new competition in the area of human health, and sustain the operating costs of Genome Canada and genome centres; strengthened oversight of Canada's mortgage insurance industry to ensure the continued stability of Canada's housing finance system; and much more.

Before continuing, let me inform Canadians and this Parliament that the supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy act includes the most pressing time-sensitive measures from budget 2011 that require legislative approval. Rest assured, as is standard, we will introduce additional legislation this coming fall to pass into law outstanding budget 2011 measures before the end of the calendar year.

[Translation]

I would like to take the time to provide a few details on some of the key measures, especially those concerning Canadian families, workers and businesses.

I will begin by underscoring the improvements we are making to the guaranteed income supplement. Although Canada's retirement income system has helped reduce the incidence of poverty among seniors in Canada, some are still living in poverty. For example, seniors who rely almost exclusively on old age security and the guaranteed income supplement may be having financial difficulties.

What is more, women who contributed significantly to supporting their family, their community and society as a whole by working hard at home may find themselves in a precarious situation and might not have other sources of income. The Conservative government recognizes the contributions of seniors and is determined to ensure that they maintain a good quality of life.

In the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act, we are proposing a new top-up benefit to the guaranteed income supplement for our most vulnerable seniors. Beginning on July 1, 2011, seniors with little or no income other than old age security and the guaranteed income supplement will receive additional annual benefits of up to \$600 for a single person and \$840 for couples. This measure represents an investment of more than \$300 million per year. It will improve the financial security and well-being of more than 680,000 seniors in Canada. These improvements have been well received by Canada's seniors since they were announced in the 2011 budget.

The C.D. Howe Institute has said that the new guaranteed income supplement top-up for low-income seniors is a significant increase in benefits.

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The Service Employees International Union was very enthusiastic about the measure, saying that the increase in the guaranteed income supplement is a victory for all Canadian seniors who are living in poverty.

Even the Canadian Labour Congress, which is also excited about the measure, stated that the CLC had been calling for an increase in the guaranteed income supplement. It said, "Minister Flaherty has made a modest improvement to the GIS in this budget. This is a win for every senior living in poverty in Canada."

The FADOQ network said the following:

This budget represents significant progress for seniors in Canada, but there is still plenty left to do.

For the FADOQ network, which has been fighting for improvements to the guaranteed income supplement (GIS) for years, the government's proposed increase is a step in the right direction.

• (1550)

[English]

Without a doubt, Canada's most vulnerable seniors have welcomed and are now really counting on the GIS top up to come into effect on July 1 as promised in budget 2011.

However, let me be very clear, the only way that this can happen is with swift passage of the supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy act before Parliament rises in the next few days.

For all they have done to build this great country, that is the very least we can do for those Canadian seniors most in need of our support. I implore all parliamentarians to act quickly to pass this act and to not let our seniors down.

Another key measure from today's act that I would like to highlight is the support we are providing Canada's veterans through tax relief for Legion purchases of Remembrance Day poppies and wreaths. The Legion's poppies and wreaths hold a special place in the hearts and minds of all Canadians as symbols of the contribution, courage, and sacrifices of those who served in the Canadian Forces, the brave men and women to whom we owe the freedom and opportunity that we enjoy today.

Each fall the Royal Canadian Legion begins its poppy campaign, which is the foundation of its remembrance program and a main source of financial support for the great work the Legion does in communities across Canada. I know how hard the Belgian Club and the Norwood Legion in my riding work to ensure that their poppy campaign is a success.

We all know how important the Legion is, not only in serving our veterans but also promoting remembrance of their sacrifices along with the countless other contributions they make to communities across Canada.

That is why our Conservative government is taking a small but important step to assist the work of the Legion and its poppy campaign through a 100% rebate for any sales taxes paid on their purchases of Remembrance Day poppies and wreaths. This is the right thing to do, and the least that we can do for our veterans and their families.

As Dominion president of the Royal Canadian Legion, Patricia Varga, recently declared:

[This measure] will mean that the funds raised by the branches for their Poppy Trust Funds will not have to go to the governments involved but will go to help veterans across Canada. Hundreds of thousands of dollars will be saved by this move and those are funds that will go to help our veterans.

A third key measure from the supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy act that I would like to highlight is the crucial financial support it provides to several provinces through the temporary extension of the total transfer protection program.

As members know, our Conservative government restored fiscal balance in Canada through long-term and fair transfer support to the provinces and territories, while the previous Liberal government radically and, frankly, shamefully slashed transfer payments to provinces and territories. The next phase of the plan reinforces our Conservative government's long-standing rejection of the old Liberal government's legacy of balancing the federal budget on the backs of provinces and territories through deep transfer cuts to health care and education.

Indeed, total federal support is now at historic levels, approximately \$57 billion, and will continue to grow in the years ahead. What is more, federal support for health, education, and social services has increased nearly 40% since we formed government in 2006.

In today's act, we are building on that record of strong transfer support by providing extraordinary protection to ensure several provinces have the stable support they need during the fragile global economic recovery by extending the temporary total transfer protection program to 2011-12.

This temporary program recognizes the short-term economic challenges several provinces and territories face as they emerge from the global recession by ensuring none receive less in 2011-12 than in 2010-11 from the major federal transfer programs, specifically from the combined equalization, Canada health transfer, and Canada's social transfer programs.

As such, this act authorizes nearly \$1 billion in payments to the affected provinces. That is \$368 million to Quebec, \$275 million to my home province of Manitoba, \$157 million to Nova Scotia, and \$157 million to New Brunswick.

This will ensure those affected provinces have the support they need to budget for the health care, educational, and other services that Canadian families depend on. In the words of New Brunswick Finance Minister Blaine Higgs, expressing his appreciation for the temporary extension:

I'm pleased that our transfer payments will continue as they did last year, so that helps us with our budget planning purposes for 2011 to 2012.

• (1555)

A fourth key measure that I would like to highlight is the financial support that the act proposes providing to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to encourage Canada's young entrepreneurs.

The Canadian Youth Business Foundation is a national non-profit organization that was founded in 1996 to help grow our economy by encouraging and supporting young entrepreneurs with mentorship, learning resources and start-up financing. Since 2002, the foundation has helped young Canadians start more than 4,000 businesses, creating close to 18,000 new jobs.

Today's act would allow the foundation to continue its excellent work with an additional \$20 million in support. According to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, this proposed investment alone will enable young Canadians to launch more than 1,000 new businesses. Even better, these businesses are expected to generate more than 6,700 new Canadian jobs. In the words of the foundation, that means:

—we will be able to continue growing the next generation of entrepreneurs, talented young people who create jobs for themselves and for others, strengthen our economy and nourish the entrepreneurial spirit of our communities.

This new contribution will support many more of the brilliant business ideas that young Canadians generate every year

A fifth and final measure in the act that I would like to highlight today is an important improvement to the RDSP program. Essentially, it came to the finance minister's attention last fall that the Tax Court of Canada had recently held that existing income tax law would not allow an individual to appeal a ruling concerning an individual's eligibility for the disability tax credit unless that affected the individual's tax payable. What that meant was that individuals with incomes too low to pay tax were effectively barred from establishing an RDSP, or their eligibility for the disability tax credit had not been accepted by the Canada Revenue Agency.

To promote the fair and equitable treatment of Canadians, our finance minister took swift action to allow individuals in every case to appeal a determination concerning their eligibility for the disability tax credit.

A CIBC tax professional, Jamie Colombek, observes:

This is very welcome news. Many people with a disability have very low income, and therefore have no tax owing. So, without this change, they might never have been able to open a Registered Disability Savings Plan if the CRA disagrees with their claim for disability.

Little wonder this proposal and the minister's swift action have been rightly applauded. In fact, the *Toronto Star* heralded that:

[The] Finance Minister...has come to the rescue of the poor and disabled.

[Translation]

These are just some of the key measures in the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act.

I believe that this important bill deserves the support of the House of Commons. Moving forward is the right thing to do—the only thing, in fact—for Canadians and our economy.

To conclude, I encourage all members to continue supporting the implementation of the next phase of the economic action plan and to back the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act.

• (1600)

[English]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know that roughly

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\$400 million more was needed for pensions to bring all older Canadians to just the average of what they needed.

How could this \$400 million have been a threat to Canada's economic action plan? Why can we not manage and budget in a way to ensure that we can bring all of those people out of poverty and have a decent phase 2 of the economic action plan? How can we not afford both?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, I am very concerned as well about the state of our seniors.

The budget implementation act will top up the guaranteed income supplement swiftly so that the seniors who are actually going to benefit from this new support will be able to get it by July 1. The budget implementation act is focused on these pressing issues because we are concerned that seniors will not otherwise get this money that should be available to them.

Yes, there is more to do, but I ask the member why on earth he is a member of a party that actually voted against a number of measures put forward by this Conservative government to help seniors, things like pension income splitting and reducing the GST, which actually help keep more money in the pockets of seniors. There were 120 tax measures to reduce taxes and help families keep \$3,000 more in their pockets every year, and yet the NDP voted against every single measure.

I would encourage the member to take to heart what he has said here today in his question. I would ask him to please vote with us to help our seniors get out of poverty and move forward so they can live their lives with dignity.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the title of the bill refers to supporting vulnerable seniors, an issue that was raised in the 40th Parliament in December of 2010. It was the decision of the Government of Canada to eliminate the optioning provision for senior citizens who withdrew their registered retirement income funds. The government eliminated the optioning of that income, thereby preventing many seniors from receiving guaranteed income supplement benefits, or risk having their benefits dramatically reduced.

When the government's action in this regard was brought to the full attention of the House, the government rescinded its decision, or at least said that it had rescinded its decision. It noted that it was wrong to take away the benefits of the guaranteed income supplement from seniors who withdrew funds from their registered retirement income funds, and pledged that it would correct the problem.

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The issue came on the back of a tax court decision called the Ward decision. The tax court ruled on when an individual was denied GIS benefits because he or she had withdrawn funds from their RRIF and the Government of Canada had withdrawn its support. Madam Ward had to take the matter to court. Regrettably, she lost. The tax court ruled that the current provisions of the Old Age Security Act as written offered the government proper recourse and authority to deny those benefits. The government said that it would change the act.

Does this budget implementation bill actually amend the Old Age Security Act to allow the withdrawal of funds from a registered retirement income fund and allow the optioning provision for the GIS and do so in accordance with the law? Yes or no?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, I want to welcome back my colleague. It will be an interesting session for the next four and a half years.

As I said during my speech, this first budget implementation act has put together measures for some very pressing and emerging issues, measures that need to be passed before we leave, possibly on June 23 if not later. These measures are imperative because if we do not pass this bill, seniors will not get their GIS, the legions will not be able to get rebates for their poppies and wreaths. There are a number of measures that are absolutely imperative to pass before the summer break.

We are going to continue to move forward on a number of other measures in a budget implementation act in the fall. We are going to continue to push forward on our platform, and the member across the way is just going to have to wait until we get to that point.

• (1605)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have been reading through the budget and paying careful attention, but I have some questions about the base statistics on which your work is done.

Most specifically, I am interested in what is commonly reported in the U.S. as the natural rate of unemployment. The U.S. Federal Reserve says that the current natural rate of unemployment in the U.S. is about 6%. Former finance ministers here have said it is about 8%.

What natural rate of unemployment are you basing the budget projections on, and can you tell me whether that natural rate is increasing or decreasing?

The Deputy Speaker: I would ask all hon. members to direct their questions through the Speaker.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague across the way for the question as it allows me another opportunity to reflect on what just happened in May. Twenty thousand new jobs were created here in Canada. That brings our total to 560,000-plus net new jobs since we took office.

The budget implementation act, which is what we are debating here today, is actually a small version of what is in the budget. The budget implementation act was designed to push the most pressing issues forward. Unemployment is a pressing issue. However, we

have to get some of these measures through by June 23, or maybe a couple of days later.

Other things that we are going to be doing on unemployment will come out in the fall. The member is just going to have to wait until we get there.

However, know this: If we proceeded, as the NDP has suggested, with raising corporate taxes, that would kill jobs, that would leave more unemployed people in Canada, that would affect families and seniors' ability to pay their bills. That is something this government will not do.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

Unfortunately, in life, we do not always get what we want. In this budget, Quebec will receive \$2.2 billion as compensation for its sales tax harmonization. There is also \$50 a month for our seniors as a guaranteed income supplement top-up. The Bloc Québécois would rather that amount be \$110, but \$50 is a first step.

The government is renewing the eco-energy program and there are tax credits for family caregivers. I do not understand how members from Quebec can vote against \$2.2 billion for Quebec. I am hoping that my colleague can explain that, because I do not understand.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. We worked together during the last Parliament, and I am looking forward to working with her in the future.

There are five members from Quebec on the government side of the House of Commons who are working very hard to implement measures that will improve things in Quebec. In the bill we are debating today, there are measures to ensure that Quebec will receive money through transfers. All members from Quebec must vote for this bill to ensure that it passes quickly. Otherwise, Quebec will suffer, since it will not receive the funds allocated for the transfers in this bill.

With respect to the other measures that have to do with Quebec, we have put forward an initiative to resolve the tax harmonization issue, and it will happen in the fall. We have five members from Quebec on this side who are working on implementing measures for forestry companies, manufacturers and so on. We will continue to move forward, but the members from Quebec on the other side are not the ones who will be putting these measures in place.

• (1610)

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am asking for unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Welland.

The Deputy Speaker: This being the opening round, the hon. member has asked for unanimous consent to share her time.

Does she have the unanimous consent of the House to do so?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, I am rising to speak to Bill C-3, but since this is the first time I am rising to speak and give a speech here, I would like to send out special thanks to the constituents of Nanaimo—Cowichan who once again sent me back to the House. This is my fourth election and I am very appreciative of that support from my riding.

Mr. David Christopherson: And so are we.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I want to thank the member for Hamilton Centre for that.

Bill C-3 is an important piece of legislation. New Democrats have indicated that they will support the bill at second reading and get it to committee and then we will determine whether we will continue to support it.

I want to spend my time today focusing on what is not in the bill.

An article from the *Star* in a report today by Stats Canada says that:

The recession stopped progress on poverty in its tracks, according to new data from Statistics Canada that indicates almost one in 10 Canadians is considered poor... the agency says the poverty rate edged up in 2009 to 9.6 per cent—the second straight year that poverty has grown after more than a decade of steady declines. About 3.2 million people now live in low income, including 634,000 children.

Today in question period we heard from the minister who agreed that poverty had edged up.

There are no significant measures in the budget to address poverty in this country, whether it is families living in poverty, whether it is children living in poverty or whether it is seniors living in poverty.

People would argue that there is an increase in the GIS, but that increase does not go nearly as far as what New Democrats had asked for prior to the election. We recognize that doubling the GIS for seniors would have some impact on the poverty they face.

New Democrats have done some significant work on suggesting what we can do to address poverty. I want to mention Bill C-545 from the previous sitting of the House, which was introduced by Tony Martin, the former member for Sault Ste. Marie. Anybody who knows Tony knows it has been his life's work to raise the consciousness in Canada around poverty and the impact that it has on our communities and our families. He worked with a number of organizations to introduce his bill called an act to eliminate poverty in Canada. We have a template here for the government. It does not have to go out and reinvent it.

I will not read the whole bill of course into the record, but I am going to talk about a couple of things.

What is poverty? As described in this act:

—poverty is the condition of a human being who does not have the resources, means, choices and power necessary to acquire and maintain economic self-reliance and to facilitate their integration into and participation in society—

It also says:

—the federal government, through constitutional and legislative amendments has direct involvement in the reduction of poverty and plays a central role in programs providing social protection and income security, including pensions, the Canada Social Transfer, the Old Age Security Program, child benefits and employment insurance benefits—

It also talks about the fact that there are many provincial governments and municipalities that either have poverty reduction strategies in place or are working toward implementing them.

The purpose of this act is to impose on the federal government the obligation to eliminate poverty and promote social inclusion by establishing and implementing a strategy for poverty elimination and consultation with the provincial, territorial, municipal and aboriginal governments and civil society organizations. It was specific.

Then it outlined what this poverty and promotional social inclusion strategy would include. I am not going to read them all but there are a couple of key points. It includes the measures necessary to prevent people from falling into poverty, reduce the incidence, depth and duration of poverty and improve the situation of all people currently living in poverty, including those living in deep poverty or poverty of long duration and those who have multiple needs.

It says it includes measures to provide income security and access to housing, includes measures to promote the involvement of Canadians in determining and implementing the solutions to poverty, determine an acceptable measurement of poverty for Canada and sets out targets to eliminate poverty in Canada in the short term of 1 to 3 years, the medium term of 4 to 7 years and in the long term of 8 years or more. There are many more points under this.

• (1615)

It is distressing when we hear members talking about the fact that the 634,000 children in Canada are living in poverty. I have to remind us all that when we are talking about children, we are talking about children and their families. It is not just children. They do not live in isolation. They live with mothers, or fathers, or brothers, or sisters. So it is important.

In 1989, we had Ed Broadbent's motion in this House to eliminate child and family poverty by the year 2000, and many of us of course have worked with campaign 2000 around the fact that we have missed that target consistently since 2000.

Once again, this budget implementation act and the budget that was introduced by the government was an opportunity to take some steps, some measurable steps, toward eliminating child and family poverty in this country and the government has failed to do that.

Just in case people think that there has not been substantial work done on this, I want to refer to the "Federal Poverty Reduction Plan: Working in Partnership Towards Reducing Poverty in Canada", produced by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. I only wish I had the time to read in all of the good works that are in this report. The report is the accumulation of numerous committee meetings, numerous testimonies by organizations that worked with people living in poverty, by people in poverty themselves, by aboriginal organizations. Many organizations came forward to talk about what the reality is for Canadians who simply do not have enough resources to pay their rent, to feed their children, to clothe their children, to even dream of being able to save money so that their children could have a university or a college education. Many of those stories were heartbreaking.

Government Orders

In my former role as aboriginal affairs critic, I am very familiar with the poverty that is facing first nations, Métis and Inuit in this country.

Sadly, I cannot read all of the recommendations in the report, but I will mention two. Recommendation 3.1.1 says:

...the federal government immediately commit to a federal action plan to reduce poverty in Canada that would see, during its first phase, the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

This action plan should incorporate a human rights framework and provide for consultations with the provincial and territorial governments, Aboriginal governments and organizations, the public and private sector, and people living in poverty, as needed, to ensure an improvement in the lives of impoverished people.

I specifically want to cite Recommendation 6.2.5, which could have been included in the budget and in the Budget Implementation Act, which states:

The Committee recommends that the federal government increase the budget for social economy initiatives and that this increased funding be used to promote job creation among low-income individuals, especially those who face serious barriers finding and securing a job.

The work has been done. The studies have been done. In fact, the legislation has been written under the old Bill C-545. It is troubling when we see a lack of response to the serious poverty issues in this country.

I want to turn to a report by the Citizens for Public Justice because this puts some numbers to it. I know sometimes numbers put people to sleep, but I think these are important numbers.

In this report, called "Bearing the Brunt: How the 2008-2009 Recession Created Poverty for Canadian Families", it says, under the heading "Poverty and child poverty rate": "After the last recession, it took 14 years for the poverty rate to return to its pre-recession level".

We are not only dealing with the current poverty in this country, but we are looking toward many years of this playing out.

It also states: "Without a poverty elimination strategy, the poverty rate in Canada will continue to rise and fall with the economic cycle. It will take a concerted effort to eradicate poverty in Canada".

I know many on the New Democrat side come from social justice backgrounds and we think it is important, that Canada has the resources and it should have the political will to develop a poverty reduction strategy.

Let me just touch on the heading "Unemployment and Employment Insurance" for a moment. Under the subheading "Unemployment", it states: "Job losses during the recession disproportionately affected those most economically vulnerable, as 1 in 4 workers making \$10 an hour or less lost their job".

It went on to talk about the erosion of the social safety net, how:

The recession revealed the inadequacy of EI as a social safety net.

Despite a rise in EI coverage, almost half of the unemployed did not receive benefits.

Canadians who did receive EI benefits were living in poverty unless they had another household source of income.

As many as 500,000 Canadians have exhausted their EI benefits without finding new work.

Of course we hear the job creation numbers touted in this House. What people fail to talk about is many of those jobs created were part-time, seasonal contract jobs.

Although we will be supporting this to go to second reading, it is a sad comment that we did not take this opportunity to address the poverty issues and develop a national poverty reduction strategy in this country.

• (1620)

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member opposite if she plans to vote for this Budget Implementation Act?

I believe and I know that the seniors who live in Mississauga South have told me that they are anxious to receive the increase on the guaranteed income supplement. Without passing this budget, that will not happen by July 1.

I would like to ask the member opposite if her poverty strategies and her concern for poverty include the seniors in Mississauga South as well as the seniors all across Canada who want and need that increase to the guaranteed income supplement, which we will be providing if we pass this budget implementation bill?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned twice in my speech, New Democrats will be supporting the budget implementation act at second reading to get it to committee.

We have some concerns with some aspects of the bill. I know members have been having that discussion with the finance minister.

It is interesting that people talk about how we do not have time, that we have rush this through, that it is important that we get out there and protect seniors. Of course New Democrats have been in the forefront of talking about seniors and pensions.

When it comes to the poorest of the poor in this country, they have been waiting since 1989 for successive governments to take action on reducing child and family poverty. They are still waiting.

When will the government, and I know I am not asking a question but, demonstrate the political will to implement a poverty reduction strategy in this country?

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Madam Speaker, to sit here today and listen to the government members wrap themselves in this business of getting next to nothing out to seniors, \$1.65 a day to people who only receive \$1,162, is disgusting. There is no other word for it.

For you to wrap yourselves in that as some kind of mythical excuse for passing this sham of a budget is disgusting. I crossed this country and I listened in 40 communities. Senior women talked to me about eating cat food, and you are sitting here, going to pass this and thinking you have actually done something.

The Deputy Speaker: I would ask all hon. members to address their comments through the Speaker, please.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, in the previous Parliament, the member took on the role of meeting with seniors, speaking up for seniors, and was instrumental in having a pension motion that the New Democrats put forward pass in this House.

The member certainly does understand the plight that is facing many of our seniors. He tells the story of seniors eating cat food. All of us in this House can share stories about the dire circumstances that many of our seniors live in.

In Nanaimo—Cowichan I have met with seniors who are actually being forced to move from the riding because they can no longer afford their homes. They cannot even afford to rent. These are families that had been living in our community for many years.

The increases in OAS and GIS simply have not kept pace with the cost of living in many of our ridings. I live in a very beautiful part of the country, but the cost of living in many parts of British Columbia is higher than in some parts of the country. These symbolic rises in GIS and OAS are not helping these seniors stay in their homes, with their families, with the communities that they have lived in and where their children have grown up.

It is atrocious that we are asking seniors to just bite the bullet one more time, to take a hit for the country, and to leave their communities, leave their families behind. If we are serious about helping seniors, the token GIS increase is important, but we would ask that the government actually address the realities of seniors' lives and increase the GIS to the levels that New Democrats had asked for prior to the election.

• (1625)

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join in this debate.

As this is the first time I rise in the House, I will take this opportunity to thank the great folks of the Welland riding, which of course is a great misnomer. We know that the Welland riding includes St. Catharines, Thorold, Port Colborne and Wainfleet, as well as the great city of Welland and all those in between.

As well, I would like to thank all of those great volunteers, specifically my family who were a great help in supporting me during the election and, indeed, during the many endeavours that my family has allowed me to participate in.

I want to follow-up with my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan in talking about seniors and the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. He did great work in the 40th Parliament, when the House unanimously adopted a motion that talked about how we could bring all seniors across this country out of poverty.

I do not think there is a member in the House who could honestly say to themselves that they think there is a senior in this country who should live in poverty. I do not believe there is a Canadian in this country who would think that a senior should live in poverty. If we all agree that there should be no senior living in poverty in this country, then where is the will to actually lift them up?

If one asks the unemployed in Welland, as I have, or the unemployed in any riding, if they think we should lift seniors out of poverty or if they should have a job first, they would say that they want seniors out of poverty. If one asks a senior living in poverty if

they think they should come out of poverty or do they think their kids or the people who live down the street should get a job, those seniors would say with all sincerity that those people should get a job. That is the remarkable character of Canadians who want to help one another.

There is a difference between a young person who is unemployed at the age of 24 and a senior who is 84. Obviously, it is age. It is the number of years they have left. The 24-year-old, judging by the lovely tables the insurance companies give us, would probably live another 60 years. The senior in poverty at 84 only has a couple of years left. Now that we have a government that says it took a step, the seniors in poverty might think that they may not have time to wait for the second step.

Why would we allow one more senior to leave us permanently who was not taken out of poverty? We owe it to them. We all stand in this place and say that we owe it to the seniors who came before us and built this great place, but those of us who are new like me and others who have been here for multi generations, we say we owe it to them and yet we cannot fulfill the promise.

One may say that we do not have the resources to do this. Seniors would understand that as they came through the Great Depression and post-World War II. They understand the sacrifices they have to make and they would continue to make them.

We all know we have the resources to lift every senior out of poverty, yet the government's recommendation in this bill is to say, "We are going to take a step".

I implore the government to find the other shoe and take the other step. It would simply cost \$400 million more, by rough estimates, to bring every single senior across the country out of poverty. What a glorious thing we could all say if every one of us stood in the House and said that we together, all 308, said that no senior should live in poverty and we accomplished it. However, what are we going to say? We are going to say, "We took a step".

A step is not good enough. It is not good enough for the seniors in my constituency who may lose their house because they cannot pay the property taxes. They choose between rent and hydro, heat in the winter or food on their plate. What is left are the property taxes, which continually go up. If they cannot afford to pay, they will lose their house. Yet, we continually say that we took a step in the right direction.

It may well be in the right direction, but the step is not big enough, it is not long enough, and it really needs to be all of the way there.

I say to my friends on the government benches that they have an opportunity to take this bill to committee because we are going to help them get it there. This is the government's opportunity to say to all seniors in this country that we will lift them all out of poverty. We will not take a step, a half measure, but will literally lift all seniors out of poverty. That would be the success of this House in its early stages.

Government Orders

● (1630)

I heard the parliamentary secretary talk it out, saying we need to get it done by July 1 because we have to have those cheques in the mail.

If the government had listened to my good friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, it had the money last year. If we want to talk about getting it done quickly, then it should have listened to that member when he brought it forward two years ago. Seniors would be receiving the cheques today. They would all be out of poverty and we would all be proud of our accomplishments.

That is what it takes when we show initiative. That is what it takes when we mean what we say. As they say in the street, “You either walk the walk or you talk the talk.” I am afraid that my friends on the government benches are still talking the talk.

There is an opportunity here. Do not lose it. I implore the government to not lose this opportunity. The reward is greater than just simply a good piece of legislation. The reward is that every time we walk down the street and we see seniors that we do not know, we can look them in the eye and without opening our mouths or moving our lips our minds can say that we were part of that House that lifted all of those seniors out of poverty.

Just think for a moment how joyous a thought we would have when we walk past those seniors and we once again see the light in their eyes brighten rather than that dullness that we see today because they do not know where their next meal will come from or whether they can keep their home or buy a small present for their grandson or granddaughter because they live in poverty. Think of the light we can put back on the faces of those seniors.

My colleagues, that alone is worth \$400 million. That alone is worth it and we have the wherewithal to do it from a resource perspective. We have the ability to do that. We have an obligation to do it. We owe that obligation to them and we ought to fulfill that obligation as our duty as MPs to all Canadians across this country.

There is an opportunity, my friends on the government benches, to do right by seniors. I ask the government to amend its implementation legislation when it comes to second reading and lift all seniors out of poverty.

When the parliamentary secretary talked about poppies and wreaths, I was absolutely thrilled to hear her do that. Let me just say that in 2009 I actually presented a private member's bill that said that is what we should do. I am glad to see that the government is finally following through on that. Albeit the bill got lost because we dissolved Parliament and we did not get to it. I am not ungrateful from the perspective that it will happen, except we could have done it last year. We could have passed that bill. I was happy to let the government move it forward if it wanted. Therefore, I am pleased to see that, indeed, we will do what is right.

I want to thank Mr. Hank Nikitezuk, a member of Branch 4 in Welland. At that time we only paid GST on the poppies. By the way, all poppies are made in Toronto. They are actually not made across this country. So are the poppy wreaths. It was Mr. Hank Nikitezuk who brought the idea to me. He said, “Do you know we pay GST on poppies?” At the time I thought it could not be so. How could we

possibly charge tax on poppies when they are being sold to raise money for veterans? It turned out to be so. When I actually informed the government that it was so, it told me it was not so until it actually did its own research and figured out that it was so. Of course, by the time it came to the realization that it was the case we had the HST. Therefore, not only did we have the GST, we also ended up with the HST.

I have a question that is somewhat rhetorical and I will ensure that it gets asked at committee. I heard the parliamentary secretary say that all tax will come off for poppies and poppy wreaths. When she says that what I am hoping is that it will be the HST. In response to questions from us, I have heard that the HST does not belong to the government any more as it is provincial. Therefore, I hope that when the parliamentary secretary said that all taxes would come off poppy wreaths and poppies, what that really meant was the HST and that all of the money will go back to the veterans.

Let me just end with EI. The EI provisions that allow the premiums to go up will outpace the amount of benefits. In the province of Ontario, 44% of claimants actually get benefits. These are the folks that we represent. That is a crime. They need and deserve benefits like everyone else across this country. That rate must go up if indeed they will be paying more.

● (1635)

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened quite carefully to my friend, who sits in front of me, from the great riding of Welland, and I thank him for his comments.

I was not a member of the House in the previous Parliament, but it seems to me that members of the official opposition were instrumental in ensuring that the budget that the minister represented in the House a week or so ago was not passed originally on March 22, and that, in fact, the leader of the official opposition delayed the increased cheques for GIS to seniors in a greater way than perhaps any other group in the House.

I would like the member to respond to this question. Why was it more important to bring this House down on March 25 rather than implementing the budget when it was presented at that time?

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Madam Speaker, far be it for me to try to put things in chronological order, but it seems to me the budget was not before us on that particular day; it was an absolutely different piece of legislation. We did not get to the budget. The government did not fall on the budget, but on a separate motion.

As much as we can roll back the clock to March and ask what would have happened if that had been different, my hon. colleague, whom I am getting to know very well, would not be here if we had not had an election; it would have been someone else sitting there.

We were not the official opposition at the time. Another party was the official opposition. We are now the official opposition and we will do our due diligence.

Clearly, if we had listened to the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, we would have had cheques for seniors in this country last July, not this July.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question is in regard to seniors and the guaranteed income supplement. I look at it from the point of view that yes, there is a high need to lift our seniors out of poverty. We too want to see more money going to our seniors in terms of their income and their pensions. In fact, I have had opportunity myself to introduce petitions, talking about the guaranteed income for our seniors and the need to increase it.

I look at the title of the bill, Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act. The member who spoke prior to the hon. member for Welland said that she was not too sure how her party would be voting on this particular bill.

Has the NDP taken a position as of yet on whether or not they will be supporting the bill?

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Madam Speaker, we have clearly said that we will send the bill to committee. I have said to my friends in the government that they have an opportunity at committee to indeed amend the bill and do what the title says, support vulnerable seniors.

The bill will help a bit, but it will still leave seniors vulnerable. I am suggesting to government members, since committee is where we can modify, change, amend, make better, that they should do what they want to do and that is to support all seniors whom they call vulnerable. When the bill comes back, they can say they no longer have to worry about it because there are no more vulnerable seniors. They can actually protect and support them, and raise them all up, and they will not have another vulnerable senior.

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his intervention. I know that he has a real interest and a real commitment to helping our seniors. When we introduce legislation, obviously there are times when not everything gets covered off, and I think he has certainly gone to great lengths to cover that off. The measures that are being implemented would remove 680,000 people. I was interested in the hon. member's comments about the GST and the HST in regard to the veterans issue. I wonder if he could elaborate just a little bit more on that for us, please.

• (1640)

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Madam Speaker, because poppies are manufactured in Toronto, Ontario, the HST applies. When the parliamentary secretary talked about the removal of all taxes, what I heard from the government side is that it was only responsible for the GST.

I am hopeful that when the government says “all”, it has struck a deal that says that the HST will not apply because poppies happen to be manufactured here. If they were manufactured somewhere else where there is no HST, it would only be that. However, that is really my hope because I wanted to see it at zero when it introduced that bill and I know the government wants to see it as zero as well.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I wish to seek the unanimous consent of the House to share my time with my hon. colleague, the member for Etobicoke North.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to split his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleagues.

[*English*]

I will begin by thanking the people of Halifax West for their confidence in me in re-electing me. It is a great honour and a privilege to serve them in this House and to work on their behalf.

I had an interesting election night. In fact, another candidate was declared elected at one point by *CBC News* in my riding. I consider that, what I would call, a near political death experience. I am all the more happy to have made it back to join colleagues here.

An. hon. member: It was a Lazarus-like experience.

Hon. Geoff Regan: My colleague from Scarborough suggests that it was Lazarus-like because he recalls that I had a different experience previously in 1997 when I took, what I sometimes call, an involuntary sabbatical when I was defeated and then returned in 2000. So, it is a great honour and privilege to be here again and I am delighted work on behalf of the people of Halifax West.

I will turn now to the bill before us, Bill C-3, the budget implementation bill. The government has certainly jammed a lot into this one piece of legislation. We have many things being dealt with, such tax exchange agreements, Genome Canada and the amending of the Auditor General's Act to provide that he or she can serve beyond the age of 65. It also deals with interest on student loans and mortgage insurance contracts in cases where companies are being wound up. It even deals with kayaks and canoes. As the owner of a couple of kayaks, I am pleased to see that the Conservatives are paying attention to us kayak owners.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: That got my attention.

Hon. Geoff Regan: I am delighted to see that the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's has noted that and is interested in that issue. I think he is probably also interested in the issue of small crafts, a little larger than kayaks and canoes, as there are lots of fishing communities in that riding, as I well know.

However, there was also a lot left out, unfortunately, of this bill. A few months ago we heard from the government how important it was to pass the budget immediately, that it was to provide immediate assistance to firefighters and caregivers through a tax credit. These things were so important to the government that they did not really make it into the budget implementation bill, and that is rather strange. The Conservatives were so anxious to get those things done and it was so important to pass the budget a few months ago and yet where are they in the bill? Where are those measures that they promised?

Government Orders

Maybe that is why the government is ramming this 55-page bill through and using the absolute minimum time for scrutiny of it. That is an odd thing. It probably hopes that we do not actually notice what else is missing from the bill, like, the home energy renovation program. That is a program the Conservatives killed twice before. They killed it when they became the government in 2006, and then a year ago they let it go again. Even though it was in their platform and in the budget, it is not important enough, apparently, to be in the budget—implementation legislation that is before us now.

I can say that my constituents in Halifax West and the businesses in my area will be disappointed at this because these are important measures.

During the election campaign, I had the opportunity to knock on thousands of doors, as I am sure everyone here did, and to talk with countless residents to hear about the issues that are of concern to them, the things that preoccupy them and that they are worried about from day to day when it comes to the Government of Canada. Obviously, sometimes they raise issues that are dealt with by other levels of government. However, people did raise concern about the home renovation program, which has been very important to people over the years. It was started by the Liberal government previously.

Many people who work in the energy and audit industry, the people who work on installing better windows or more insulation and doing the various things that could make homes more energy efficient, the small contractors who work in this field, were very concerned.

Seniors, who relied on and benefited from this program, were very angry with the Conservatives when they quietly killed this program a little more than a year ago. Many of them are anxious to have it back. They are anxious to see it again. It is too bad that it is not in this bill, and I would like to know why.

I hope colleagues on the Conservative government side will tell us why it is not in this bill. It is too bad, as well, that the government is not committed to long term, stable funding for this kind of important program. The Conservatives talk about how they have a stable majority Conservative government and so forth. Why can they not provide, with that majority, stable funding for the home renovation program? Why are they only funding it for one year? What is it about this program that makes it only good enough to fund for one year? Why is it not good enough to have in the bill?

● (1645)

I also heard from firefighters and caregivers who wondered why the Conservatives would not provide refundable tax credits so low-income earners could qualify. That is what we have been talking about in question period and in the House in general.

In fact, one volunteer firefighter called my office just the other day. This is a young student who does not make enough to even qualify for the tax credit. Is the Conservatives' view really that students should not get the benefit of that, even though they are giving the 200 hours or more required as volunteer firefighters in their communities? Do they not think those people's service is important to the community? Can they really say that it is not important enough that they should receive the benefit of this program?

If it had been refundable, this student, who is struggling to pay his way through university, would have received a \$500 rebate. Under the Conservatives, he will get nothing. People like him wonder why the Conservatives have programs for rich Canadians and corporations but nothing for low-income earners.

We have seen the government's fiscal plan for corporations. We know that it is lowering taxes for the country's largest corporations but it is doing nothing for small businesses. They already have a tax rate of 11%. The government has dropped the corporate tax rate for the largest companies in the country, from 18% to 15%, when they were already competitive internationally and 25% below American rates. Why? It is because the Conservatives are not concerned about the little person. They are concerned about their friends, apparently, at least that is what it looks like.

In my riding of Halifax West, people told me during the election campaign and since that we need to do more to support families. They are concerned. They are having a tough time making ends meet these days. They need help finding child care spaces and affordable education. They need help looking after their aging parents, finding high quality jobs and reuniting with family members abroad.

I have a riding that is very diverse. Many people who live in my riding of Halifax West were not born in Canada or in Nova Scotia. They were born elsewhere in the world. There are probably more newcomers to Canada in Halifax West than in any other constituency east of Quebec City, perhaps even Montreal.

People are telling me that they are having difficulty with the rising cost of living. They are having trouble making ends meet and they are not seeing concern or getting assistance from the government, whether it is buying groceries or paying for a tank of gas, and of course we are seeing the cost of that rising. They also want to ensure that we leave a clean environment for their children and grandchildren. It is not something we see as a priority at all by the Conservative government.

I look forward to raising these issues during the 41st Parliament, along with my colleagues. We in this party will also be watching to ensure that the government keeps its promises in other areas, like the one to fund the undersea cable from Newfoundland and Labrador to bring Muskrat Falls power to Nova Scotia. We will be looking as well for Ottawa to be at the table with the Province of Nova Scotia and the municipality for the new convention centre in Halifax, and many other issues.

There are a few good things in this bill but there is so much missing and so much more the government could have done, especially if what it says about the economy and its ability to spend is true.

Government Orders

• (1650)

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Madam Speaker, leading into the member's comments about good things in the bill, I would like to hear the good things about the helmets to hard hats program that is in the bill. That would be an excellent one and I am sure it is something his riding would welcome. I would like to hear some positive things about our budget and I am sure this would be a positive one for him to expand on.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see the minister back again. We have mutual friends who live in my riding and with whom she has visited Croatia.

I know she knows that she can be confident in hearing lots of positive things about the budget from the government side, which has more than enough time to extol the virtues of itself and of this bill, which I really think, as I said, has a great deal missing from it.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague brings a lot of experience to the House. Notwithstanding the sabbatical, it is great to see him back here.

My colleague talked about the short-term aspects of some of these great programs and extolled the virtues of some of them, but they are short-term in nature.

The best 14 weeks pilot project is essential not just for workers, but also for businesses to allow them to survive in the smallest of communities. However, it will be extended for only one year.

My colleague talked about the program for home renovations. It also will be extended for just one year.

The CBC gets a \$60 million cut, but at the same time what the CBC requires is a long-term investment to allow it to plan several years down the road, a model similar to what the BBC uses.

Could my colleague talk about that once again and also about some of those programs that deserve to be invested in over a much longer term? Could he also talk about how shortsighted the budget implementation bill is on some of these measures?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, the question my colleague asked is about the short-term nature of many of the provisions in the budget. For a government that talks about being stable, I have to wonder why it cannot offer stability in some of the measures that it has in the bill or some of the measures it has trumpeted so loudly in the past, like these pilot projects.

These pilot projects are a big issue in areas like eastern Quebec and Atlantic Canada. A lot of communities rely upon seasonal industries when other kinds of work are not available and those industries need people to be available to do work for them. These pilot projects have been critically important in helping people to put food on the table and helping them to get through some difficult periods. It is a concern.

The government wants people to believe it is actually concerned about them, but only for a year. If the government is concerned, why would it only have these measures in place for a year? What magical thing will happen in a year's time that will make these measures unnecessary? Is every home in the country going to be renovated and

energy efficient a year from now? That seems extremely unlikely. What makes that program worthwhile, but only for a year?

It makes me wonder if these programs were just put in the window for the purpose of an election. Was the idea simply to get votes with these measures? The government is suggesting that it is doing a great thing, but it is not mentioning too loudly the fact that it is going to do it only for a year. A year from now it is going to yank these programs away.

• (1655)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-3.

Before doing so, I must first thank and express my deep admiration, appreciation and respect for the very good people of Etobicoke North. Many in our community have become real family and friends. I thank the people of Etobicoke North for the privilege of humbling serving them. I promise to raise their issues in this great House and to fight for what is important to them.

Today I will tackle jobs, health and the environment.

Etobicoke North is one of thirteen priority areas for the city of Toronto. The people in my riding want jobs. Our youth want jobs. As a result, I spend many constituency days meeting fathers, mothers and young people who are unemployed, correcting covering letters and resumes, providing job interviewing skills and, most important, finding placements and work for our community members.

Last Parliament I was able to lobby the government for a new jobs program for our community, but my community needs more help now. It needs a real plan for job creation and a plan for youth employment. How many jobs will the next phase of the government's plan produce? How many of these jobs will come to Etobicoke North?

Going forward, I believe health care will be a defining issue of the next four years. My constituents, like Canadians across the country, want their health care system to be there when they and their families need it most.

During the election, family after family told me they wanted federal leadership on hospital wait times. A 2011 study from the Canadian Institutes for Health Information shows wait times for priority procedures vary widely across the provinces. For example, in some provinces more than half of cataract and knee replacement patients wait longer than the recommended time frames for their procedures. Currently no pan-Canadian benchmarks exist for CT and MRI scans, both necessary for diagnosis.

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Let me highlight the importance of diagnostic imaging. One Canadian patient, 77 years old who was in growing pain, losing weight and becoming steadily more ill over the course of many months was told to wait for five months for an MRI, despite the fact that her doctor suspected she had cancer. As the result, her family paid more than \$11,000 U.S., out of pocket, for a trip to the Mayo Clinic. She was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Canadians want better results from their health care system, particularly at a time when our aging population is putting pressure on the system's ability to deliver. I believe Alzheimer's disease and other dementia are among the most significant and critical health care issues in Canada, and we cannot ignore them.

Today 500,000 Canadians suffer with some form of dementia. The impact on those with the illness, and on their families, is profound, as is the cost to society, \$15 billion today, \$150 billion in 30 years.

Where is a national or federal strategy to cope with the rising tide of dementia? Existing federal programs, research funding, support and income assistance pale in comparison to the enormous and rapidly escalating health, economic and social impacts of this devastating disease.

In the last Parliament I introduced a bill to establish a national Alzheimer's office within the Public Health Agency of Canada to develop, in conjunction with provincial health departments, a comprehensive national plan to address all aspects of Alzheimer's disease and related dementia and specifically to improve the lives of persons with dementia and decrease the burden on society.

My last point regarding health is the need for evidence-based policies. The government has been made aware that over 12,500 treatment procedures for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, or CCSVI, have now been undertaken worldwide in over 50 countries and that some MS patients report improved quality of life, including reduced brain fog, fatigue, improved circulation and motor skills following the procedure. Sometimes we ignore the obvious at our peril.

● (1700)

In 1982 Barry Marshall and Robin Warren, Australian physicians, identified a link between an ulcer and a bacterium and it was 1994 before the medical system recommended treating that bacterium with antibiotics.

Why is the government refusing to undertake a nationally funded multi-centre clinical trial to determine if treating CCSVI will improve the quality of life for MS patients, 55,000 to 75,000 of them in Canada? Multiple treatment trials are under way in the United States. It is time for Canada to act.

The last issue I will tackle is climate change, one of Earth's most pressing challenges and perhaps a defining issue of our generation.

The floods that devastated Pakistan, Venezuela and Colombia this year are a wake-up call. The wildfires that gripped Russia are a wake-up call. There will be worse impacts, more wake-up calls and no country will be exempt.

Despite this year's extreme weather warnings, the government failed to even mention climate change in the throne speech. No

wonder we keep winning fossil awards for being followers instead of leaders on the world stage.

In 2009 the government missed a real opportunity for a triple win, a renewable stimulus with positive impacts on the economy, jobs and the atmosphere.

In 2009 it invested \$1 billion in a green infrastructure fund over five years to support projects like public transit, sustainable energy and waste management. In stark contrast, Germany invested \$13 billion, the United States \$50 billion and China \$221 billion, or 220 times that of Canada.

Is the government missing another opportunity in 2011 with its clean air agenda?

Climate change is not a closed case. We can rise to the challenge, as in the past when major powers rose to the challenge. They built country-wide railways, they fought in World War I and World War II and they travelled to the moon.

If all current plans and pledges to cut or limit emissions were delivered completely on time, global emissions would still keep growing during the next 10 years. Canada has a responsibility to make progress on the 2020 target and not just one-quarter of the way.

More stringent actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions cannot be postponed much longer. Otherwise the opportunity to keep the average global temperature rise below 2° Celsius is in danger and serious impacts are associated with this limit, including an increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, shifts in growing seasons and sea level rise.

Climate change was missing from the throne speech and is wholly under-represented in budget 2011. Canada should honestly listen to the voice from the front line on climate change, should ensure that those impacted by climate change are meaningfully involved and that those who make the decisions must be accountable to those impacted.

Finally, it is important for the government to realize that individuals are making change in their own lives and that they want change on the national and international stage.

It is also important that parliamentarians ask this question. "Is this something my children would be proud of?"

Climate negotiations require sacrifice. We must negotiate for our children who are not here. We have to accept moral responsibility.

• (1705)

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Madam Speaker, first, I congratulate the member for Etobicoke North for being re-elected in what I think she would probably agree was a bit of a sea of blue in Etobicoke and neighbouring Mississauga.

She spent a fair bit of time talking about health care. I hope the member, in her response, will acknowledge the fact that this government has maintained the 6% increase in transfer payments to our provincial partners for health care and that we have been a very strong government in working with the provinces to give them flexibility to deliver front-line health care services to all our residents who rely on them.

Will she stand and acknowledge the record of this government in terms of our funding for health care?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague and thank him for his question. However, I would ask, what has the government done on negotiations for 2014? I was very clear on the government's lack of progress on wait times and I did give some very clear examples.

We need to be talking about the future of health care. I see nothing about building the future of health care. I see nothing about genomics and how it would allow tomorrow's physicians to predict in utero or at birth what major diseases a person is likely to develop. A physician could then prescribe a personalized program such as lifestyle changes to prevent disease going forward.

Personalized medicine would reveal whether an individual is likely to respond well to a drug and would ensure that each patient receives the right medicine at the right time. There could be vaccines created to specifically treat a person's cancer. I know stem cells are frightening for many people, but they need to understand that I as an adult can take stem cells from my own hip bone and be treated for disease.

It is important to start having these conversations about the future of health care.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague's knowledge of issues regarding health care is quite extensive and I congratulate her on her response a short time ago. I would also commend her for her work on CCSVI and MS. She has educated MPs from all parties on this issue in the last Parliament and I am sure will continue to do so in this Parliament.

I want to go back to the climate change issue. I agree with my colleague that climate change was not featured in the Speech from the Throne. I remember several occasions some time ago when the government bragged about its work from Copenhagen and other major international conferences despite the fact that criticism was levied against it from many other countries.

One of the issues was carbon sequestration, which was talked about extensively, but I do not hear much about that any more. Perhaps the hon. member could shed some light on this. I do not know if the government could. However, I used to hear a lot about that and how it could affect reducing the adverse effects of climate

change, especially when it comes violent weather. The average sea temperature in eastern Canada right now is rising. I was hoping she would comment on that.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague and thank him for the tremendous work he does. It is an honour to serve with him in the House.

My colleague has raised important issues. It is important for people to understand that climate change is not just an environmental issue, it is a human rights issue. For some people it may mean the right to live. Climate change is also an international security issue and a justice issue. The ones who are suffering the most have the least responsibility for it.

Here in Canada it is important for us to listen to those on the front line. The front line voices are those who live in the north of Canada, our aboriginal people, and the Maldives who live slightly above sea level.

I had the privilege of going to Westminster on climate change. We heard from a woman from Bangladesh that salt water had intruded onto her farmland. As a result, her husband had to work in the forest where he was mauled to death by a tiger. Since her husband had died, she was sent to live with her family where a hurricane hit and they lived for a month on an embankment. That was how they survived. She came to Westminster to tell parliamentarians, "Big important people do justice for us. Climate change is deep down in my heart painful".

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise again in the House in this Parliament.

I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

I want to commend you, Madam Speaker, on your appointment as Deputy Speaker. It seems all members have been standing in the House thanking everyone back home who has helped get them here and I would like to do the same.

I would first like to thank God for this remarkable opportunity to serve the people of Crowfoot. I want to thank my constituents and constituency for supporting me in the last election.

We all have supporters who help get each one of us elected. I would like to thank my wife Darlene for her unwavering support and love, and the help she gave me in the work that I do constantly. A supportive spouse in a place like this is absolutely imperative and I am very blessed to have the one I have.

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I also want to thank my two children, Kristen and Ryan. This is about the only time I can do it. Both of them during the campaign helped out by their support and being there. Today is my daughter Kristen's 19th birthday and far too often members of Parliament are working here in Ottawa as our loved ones back home are celebrating some of the significant events in their lives. Dad wishes he was home today with her, but we will be celebrating on the weekend. I thank Ryan for his help around the farm and the ranch when I am not around.

I had a campaign manager who has campaigned with me for the last four elections, Steven Snider. I thank him for his expertise, as well as my official agent, Neil Thorogood. We all have those who have hung around for all of these elections over the years. My riding is quite extensive geographically and I have campaign offices set up throughout it, with many people staffing the offices in Camrose, Three Hills, Strathmore and others.

Throughout the years in opposition, Conservatives diligently worked toward the day where, as a political party, we could bring forward effective change through budgets and throne speeches or addressed during budget time. We wanted to see taxes lowered. We wanted to see a reduction in taxes.

We wanted a country, a government and a nation being able to pay down the debt load that every Canadian is faced with. We wanted to be able to spend federal funds effectively and efficiently. We wanted to stand up to those who would abuse our criminal justice system and to tell criminals there are going to be tougher sentences while supporting those who have been victims of crime. We wanted to be able to implement many other policies, including the Senate, over the five elections that I have been involved in and campaigned on.

Today, we have the opportunity to address this budget implementation bill, to discuss some of the issues, to see that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and that hopefully we will be able to achieve some of what we have promised. I am proud to report to all the people I have mentioned, the campaigners and voters who supported me, that we will keep our promises and live up to our word.

The budget we are working on today is almost exactly what we introduced before the election. During the election campaign, we said we would bring back the same budget or many of the measures that were in it, and we kept our word. The budget includes some of what we campaigned on and the budget implementation bill that we are debating today keeps the promises we made.

In my riding of Crowfoot and the surrounding ridings in the province of Alberta, we are certain about a number of things. We are certain, first, about our political views. We know what works well in the province of Alberta, in our homes and communities, and we continue to push for the things that we value.

● (1715)

For the first time in my political career, the electors in my riding are enjoying a majority government. The Crowfoot riding has always been one of those ridings that has been fiscally conservative, most of it very socially conservative in that it is compassionate about those who need help.

In the 41st Parliament, the MPs from across Canada who share our views have been elected, elected to form, not just government as we have for the last five and a half years but government in a majority sense. We have waited a long time.

Today we are debating the budget implementation bill. The budgetary process is complex. Canadians have already heard the news that the next phase of Canada's economic action plan has been approved. It was approved last night by the House of Commons.

It is technically correct, the budget passed, but what the House passed is merely a general motion that approved our Conservative government's budgetary policy. What we debate today is needed in order to implement the provisions that we passed last night. This is standard procedure.

The budget implementation bill will be sent to committee now for hearings and then returned to this chamber for report stage and third reading, and then it will repeat this process as it goes to the Senate. Once the budget implementation bill is passed, we can move forward on the measures in the budget that will help hard-working Canadians and their families.

The measures in the bill focus on the Canadian economy. It contains measures that support hard-working Canadians and their families, and it will aid in the economic recovery.

We said it during the election campaign and we say it again, "We will keep taxes low". We are targeting investments to support jobs, to support the creation of new jobs, and to also hold and keep the jobs we have already. We want to see growth. We are improving the quality of life for our seniors, our families and our children.

We said in the budget and in the budget implementation bill that we will control government spending and stay on track to eliminate the annual federal budgetary deficit with a plan to do it by 2014-15.

At a time when budgets are tight, our government believes that taxpayers should not be overburdened with an annual \$27 million subsidy for political parties. We are freeing taxpayers from that yoke that was around their neck with this bill. We believe that engagement by individual Canadians is what empowers political parties.

I noted one day that the NDP member for Hamilton Centre spoke on this issue. We have a difference of opinion. We talked about democracy that day and the importance of democracy. The view, and I believe his is well-intentioned, is that taxpayers should fund this democracy in a way that we believe is not right. We believe that political parties are not entitled to taxpayers' dollars, but that we should raise those funds from within our own ranks and from our supporters.

As Canadians support a political party, I will approach my supporters, my volunteers, and those who vote for me and I will ask them to contribute to the effort. I will not simply say to the 45,000 who voted Conservative in my riding, "Don't worry about it. There will be \$90,000 a year coming in to the political party". No, we will ask for their support. It is not the entitlement any more. We should not be automatically going to the treasury of our country and asking for that type of funding.

Taxpayers, at least what they told me in the riding of Crowfoot, believe there are better things the government should be spending their money on. In fact, the default position of the voters I represent is, "Please, stop taxing me to death. Reduce my taxes. Stop spending my tax dollars on everything possible and instead, only spend taxpayers dollars on necessary and desirable programs and services". Those were some of the quotes that I heard in the last election. One of the best ones was when an older gentleman from Hanna came to me and said, "Tell Ottawa to spend less so we can keep more".

● (1720)

This budget does a lot for seniors and for Canadians. We look forward to being able to implement this, hopefully sooner rather than later. Hopefully we can do this in a short number of days.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member took great delight in bragging about all the things the government was doing for seniors. If the government is doing such a great job in raising seniors out of poverty, why are there more seniors in poverty now than when the Conservatives first came into power?

He talked about subsidies and how they were unfair to Canadian taxpayers, et cetera. Does the hon. member really think it is fair and democratic for his government to receive 40% of the vote, but receive 100% of the power?

My colleague also talked about wasting political money on political subsidies. Could he explain to us why it is okay then for senators, who are appointed and receive good pay, to spend 100% of their time during an election campaign working on that campaign? Is that not just another subsidy?

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Madam Speaker, I thought that if I referenced the member in my speech, there would be a good chance he would stand and ask a question.

With respect to seniors, we are so pleased to be able to recognize that significant demographic in our country. Seniors have built our country. They fought for our freedom and our liberty so we could enjoy all our values.

However, we also recognize that there are some who are vulnerable. That is why we have brought forward measures in the budget that would give another \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, those who are the most vulnerable. We have a different philosophy than that of the NDP. We believe that for those who are vulnerable, we will put measures in place to help them.

My colleague talked about our government receiving 40% of the vote. We have a system that probably is the best system in the world. It is called first past the post. I believe there is less chance of corruption, fraud and all those things that may go on in some parts of the world during elections. First past the post served the old British parliamentary system quite well and it has served us well in Canada.

He mentioned the Senate. We have talked about the need to reform the other place election after election. We will continue to move forward with measures that will make the Senate effective. We will not allow 45-year terms for senators. We will move on these issues.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the contrast between the walk and the talk reminds me of an article I saw in this morning's *Ottawa Citizen* by well-known

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Conservative commentator Dan Gardner. In this article he contrasts the rhetoric of the Prime Minister with the reality of the government. He says:

And the record of [the Prime Minister's] government doesn't look much like the beliefs of [the Prime Minister].

Record spending increases. Surpluses turned into structural deficits. Bureaucratic bloat. Vote-buying tax policies that make economists pull their hair out. Hyper-centralization of power. Slush funds. Pork-barrel politics. Cronyism and patronage that would make a Liberal blush. A plan to fix the budget as credible as Greek bonds.

I would be interested in the hon. member's comments on reconciling his walk and his talk.

● (1725)

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Madam Speaker, if Dan Gardner is the individual who wrote *The Trouble With Canada* and the *The Trouble with Democracy*, then I would encourage everyone to read them. Most of the troubles he wrote about were the troubles that took place over 13 years of Liberal government.

I have gone to meetings where the NDP talked about Canada being a country with taxes that were too low. The Liberals said that if they only had another term, they would be able to solve all the problems they did not solve in those 13 years.

A new day is dawning in our country. We have a majority government. We are very much looking forward to the positive policies that we can bring forward for Canadian families, for children, for seniors, for all those across the country.

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, everybody is thanking everybody and I would like to do that as well. I certainly congratulate you for repeating your position. I always admired your work in the last session, and I know I will admire your work in this session. Also, I have admired your work as chair of the all party arts caucus. I hope you will find the time to take that on again. You did a great job and we need that caucus.

I thank the people of Dufferin—Caledon for electing me for the fourth time. Of course it was four elections in seven years, but it seems like it has been forever. Certainly we need workers to get elected. We cannot do it ourselves. I thank all those people who have helped me. I thank my wife and family for the help they gave me as well.

Today, we are debating Bill C-3, which is the budget-implementation bill and which was proposed by the Minister of Finance. It is titled "Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act", which will allow the government to support seniors in need and help provinces during the economic recovery, encourage young entrepreneurs in business and enhance federal assistance for part-time students, among other measures.

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As the member of Parliament representing Dufferin—Caledon, I have an important role in ensuring our government delivers to the residents of my riding, as we all do for all our ridings. In the opinion of my constituents, certainly after going through an recent election, it is absolutely necessary for the government to help Canada recover from the recession. Bill C-3 and the budget we have introduced will make this happen.

The government remains committed to the economy, as it attempts to deliver on Canada's economic action plan. This economic action plan is working, as evidenced by the fact that in the first year alone almost \$32 billion in stimulus spending and tax relief was delivered. With this budget, the government intends to deliver another \$28 billion in support for recovery from this recession.

The implementation of budget 2011, through the supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy act, will, I believe, make this happen.

The investments made over the last two years have been successful in shielding Canadians from the worst economic downturn we have had in years. The carefully researched and focused 2009 budget was prepared to respond the challenges of our time. As a result, over 28,500 projects have been completed or are under way, which has created over 480,000 jobs across the country. I believe it is now up to 560,000 jobs since 2009.

Of these projects, over 8,100 revolved around provincial, territorial and municipal infrastructure projects. This includes over 4,100 infrastructure stimulus fund projects and over 2,000 recreational infrastructure Canada projects. Many of these projects, I am pleased to say, occurred in my own riding of Dufferin—Caledon. I think every member here could talk about the projects that occurred in all of their ridings.

Residents of Dufferin—Caledon are benefiting from this plan, as a result of the significant federal investment in projects, which range from road and water infrastructure to recreational facilities throughout the riding. Perhaps the largest the venture was the continuation of the Caledon community complex in the town of Caledon for which the town received \$7 million. Other projects include the construction of a sewage treatment plant in East Luther Grand Valley and the renovation of the Dufferin County courthouse in Orangeville. Additionally, federal grants have been spent on water infrastructure in Shelburne, Orangeville and Peel, with road infrastructure occurring in Caledon, East Garafraxa, Orangeville, Mulmur and Peel.

Federal contributions also supported recreational facilities, such as the construction of a skate park in Bolton and the upgrading of trails at the Albion Hills Conservation Area.

● (1730)

In an effort to invest in a cleaner energy economy, federal support was given to the Mayfield recreational project to upgrade accessibility and energy initiatives. Over the course of the last two years, our riding of Dufferin—Caledon has received federal assistance in over 30 projects, reaching a grand total of \$31,888,372.

The construction and renovations that occurred in Dufferin—Caledon helped to deliver an immediate boost to local jobs and incomes within the area and the completion of these projects will

deliver benefits to the citizens of the riding for many years to come. These projects have all occurred as a result of the last budget. It is clear that the government has created an economic plan in which Canadians will feel secure.

The next phase is critically important. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan is intended to build on the success of the stimulus plan and create conditions for long-term economic prosperity throughout the country. It will support job creation, families and communities, invest in innovation, education and training and preserve Canada's fiscal advantage.

Our government has listened to the citizens of Canada and the residents of my riding of Dufferin—Caledon. The budget and the bill before us reflect the comments, suggestions, concerns, wants and needs of Canadian citizens, including those of my riding.

Budget 2011 and Bill C-3 will continue to support jobs and growth within provinces and territories throughout the country. The legacy of modernized infrastructure, enhanced skills training and lower taxes will continue to benefit Canadians.

The proposed bill will keep taxes low, which is a concern for Canadians throughout the nation, and it will control government spending, which will help to eliminate the deficit by 2015.

The bill reflects the priorities of the residents of my riding with an emphasis on the economy and the reduction of the deficit. The interests of our citizens are reflected as our government has remained focused on our citizens and on securing the economic recovery of our country.

We have a plan to achieve the goals of improving the financial security of Canadian workers, families and seniors and we must continue to focus upon this plan.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan is dedicated to the continuation of this plan. The budget and the bill are dedicated to the creation of jobs. As we continue to recover from the recession, it is vital for the government to help our citizens find work. Our government has realized this and we have worked to ensure that job creation occurs throughout the next two years.

With the budget and Bill C-3, the Conservative government is ensuring that our citizens will find work that will help them support their families. Specific measures include providing a one-time hiring credit for small businesses, which will encourage hiring. Bill C-3 would provide \$20 million over the next two years to help Canadian Youth Business Foundation in its support of young entrepreneurs.

Dufferin—Caledon is the home of a thriving business community, with many start-up businesses in various industries. These initiatives will help all those involved in the business sector in the area. It is vital that we support job creation as presented by the next phase of Canada's economic action plan and the bill before us.

The well-being of Canadians is important to the government and the budget and the bill will continue to support seniors, children and students. This budget is especially important to our country's seniors who have worked to build a great country for future generations and who deserve a dignified retirement.

The senior community represents a large portion of Dufferin—Caledon and I have had the privilege of hosting several seniors' expos held in the riding for numerous years. Through these events, I have had the opportunity to meet many of my senior constituents and listen to their concerns.

Budget 2011 and this bill protect our seniors and will increase their financial support. Through the enhanced guaranteed income supplement as stated in the supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy act, eligible seniors would receive annual benefits of up to \$600 for a single senior and \$840 to couples. This action will improve the financial security of more than 680,000 seniors throughout Canada, including those residing in my riding.

I had a bit more to say, but my time is up.

• (1735)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said a lot about seniors, and it is something with which we should be seized.

As the member will know, we thought there could have been a lot more done for seniors. In fact, before the election, we had fought to ensure that more seniors would be covered in the budget submission. Sadly, the government did not hear our message or the message of seniors that there could be more done so we could lift more out of poverty.

I want to be very specific in terms of the budget. If the member could take a look at page 183 of the budget and the strategic and operating review. Could the member enlighten us on whether we will see savings out of the strategic and operating review? Could the member tell us what the plan is to find those savings and assure Canadians, including his constituents, that no one will be affected in terms of the service delivery by government to constituents? It seems lacking in a plan.

How can we be confident of the plan in the budget when all we see is a reference to savings, but not a lot of detail? Could the member enlighten us on that?

Mr. David Tilson: Mr. Speaker, the member is right. The focus of our government in this bill and in the budget has been on seniors. Certainly in my riding, it was a question that was asked throughout the election.

I know my friend on the other side talks about how we could do more and it was made quite clear prior to the election that he thought we could do more. The problem is, of course, we have just gone through a recession. We are still not out of that. We are still worried.

The assistance that has been given, and I will not repeat the items that are in the budget and in the bill as we have gone over those a number of times, are certainly modest. Compared to what the New Democratic Party wants, they are very modest. However, considering the times, I think it is pretty good and the seniors like that.

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As far as the plan is concerned, the minister has made it quite clear we are going to have a review.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the previous speaker from the Conservatives questioned the Liberal Party's commitment to health care. With regard to the health care accord, which is so critically important to Canada, the government seems to be quite content to sit back and do nothing, in terms of engaging provinces to try to get dialogue going so that we can have a 2014 health care accord that all Canadians can be proud of.

How much longer do we have to wait before the government decides to start opening negotiations with provinces so that we can have a health care accord for 2014? Why wait so long?

Mr. David Tilson: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the person asking the question is a Liberal. I can certainly remember having the honour of serving at Queen's Park as a member of the provincial parliament and listening to the Liberal government with its cuts of \$25 billion for health care. That is how it got rid of the deficits in this country.

We have made a commitment to increase the transfer payments by 6%. We have increased our payments by 33% since we entered office. It is never enough, of course. Health care is a serious problem. That is why we have to have some very serious negotiations with the provinces by 2014 with respect to the accord. We all have our responsibilities. The provinces have their responsibilities. The federal government has its responsibilities. It will require some debate in this House. Health care is certainly first on the mind of everyone in this country and we all have our job to do.

• (1740)

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

I would also like to thank the voters in the riding of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles and my family, my husband and my two daughters, Frédérique and Sarah-Alexandre. I would also like to thank my entire team of volunteers who made it possible for me to be here today.

On June 6, the hon. finance minister introduced his 2011 budget entitled "A Low-Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth". The budget, as introduced in March 2011, was rejected by the NDP. We are still not satisfied with this new, slightly modified version, which does not meet the expectations and needs of the voters who placed their trust in us.

Although the government is relieved that it has obtained its majority and will govern for four years, it should not forget that the majority of voters gave their vote of confidence to other parties, which have not formed the government. We are talking about 60% of the voters.

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Not all Canadians said yes to the economic plan proposed by the Conservative government. This clearly indicates that voters want to have a say in what will be decided and implemented in Ottawa, and the government must take that into account. The government will also have to explain to millions of voters why some measures to support families are not in the budget.

It is this reality that the NDP is concerned about. There is nothing in the government's proposals to improve the living conditions of Canadian families. Poverty exists in Canada and increases every year. All experts agree that, for the past few years, the gap between rich and poor families in Canada has been widening. Inequalities persist rather than diminish.

However, there have been some small steps forward. In 1989, Canada's poverty rate was 10.2%; in 2008, it was 9.4%, a reduction of 0.8% in 20 years. In 1989, the poverty rate for those under 18 was 11.9%; in 2008, it was 9.1%, a reduction of 2.8% in 20 years. Canada can do much better for its people, and we cannot be pleased about such a small decrease in poverty.

Our youth are in a precarious position. In 1981, 31.2% of young workers between 14 and 24 had a low-wage job. In 2000, the proportion had risen to 45%, a sharp increase in 20 years.

Given the precarious situation facing young people, parents are being forced to provide for their children longer, since they do not have the means to start their own families. The only significant measures brought in to help children date back to 1990 and 1998—so over 10 years ago now—namely, the Canada child tax benefit and the national child supplement.

The benefits of those measures, which were meant to make things easier for families, have diminished over the years, because at the same time, employment insurance benefits have decreased and certain medical services have been delisted. Social assistance payments were lower in 2007 than in 1986. The employment insurance system was less generous in 2008 than in 1981. In 2007, the poverty gap was the same as in 1981. The average family needs an extra \$6,700 a year.

Disparities also persist in the workplace. Canadians now have to work a lot more in order to provide for their families. The percentage of Canadians working 50 hours or more a week has increased. Disparities also persist in health care. More and more young people are reporting health problems that affect their daily functioning—things like memory, reasoning and mental health problems. In 1998, 80% of young people aged 12 to 19 said they were in good health. In 2005, only 67% reported the same.

The Canadian government needs to do something for the future of our children and youth and support all Canadian families that contribute to our economic development, even though some of these families are going through tough times, such as job loss, the death of a parent, illness or any other number of things that can happen in life.

All programs are needed in order to help Canadians re-enter the workforce and allow them to get by when they face an unexpected financial loss.

• (1745)

Any decreases or cuts to support for families undermine the many years of effort to combat poverty and inequality in Canada.

The NDP is asking the government to urgently consider measures that are not included in the budget but that would help families meet their basic needs, namely, decent housing, jobs with salaries that are commensurate with skills and experience, help for all children living at home, benefits to ensure that all families are able to eat a healthy diet every day, programs that give access to health care and programs to support young workers and those with less training.

The NDP is also asking the government not to call into question assistance that has already been granted and not to reduce assistance for unemployed workers. The NDP reiterates its request that the government help people who are unable to work and who do not have the resources to meet their family or other obligations.

In a recent report, the OECD expressed its concerns about the high rate of unemployment in Canada. Young people and those with less training are still the most affected by unemployment. As a result, reducing or eliminating programs to help unemployed workers will make many families more vulnerable by depriving them of the support they need, or it might plunge them into long-term poverty.

The government is capable of adopting measures to support businesses in case of an economic crisis or recession. Why then is it so difficult to do the same for families who are also experiencing financial crises? Why ignore this reality that affects many families each day?

Immediate action must be taken to increase assistance. It will be too late for many families if we do not act quickly enough.

In another area, the decrease in the public service's budget will directly affect workers who will be under a great deal of pressure to get the work done in deplorable conditions. They will be asked to produce more and work longer hours for the same salary. They will be at risk of burnout, depression and psychological harassment.

The NDP believes that it is shameful and completely irresponsible to attack families once again; on the contrary, they need relief from their troubles.

In conclusion, Canada seems to have become a much richer country but, in reality, only the incomes, and thus the wealth, of the richest 20% of Canadians have increased.

Poverty in a rich country is not an inevitability; it is the result of poor policies. Therefore, the government must propose a real agenda to eradicate poverty and inequality.

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, could my colleague tell us who is most affected by poverty in Canada?

Ms. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to answer my colleague's question.

Those most affected are single parents, single individuals between the ages of 45 and 65, recent immigrants—since 2000, three-quarters of new immigrants have been members of a visible minority, persons with disabilities and aboriginals.

• (1750)

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles thinks we could do to truly resolve the issues of poverty and inequality in Canada.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

It is absolutely possible to fight poverty, because persistent poverty in a country like ours is the result of bad policies. If we change some policies, we can considerably reduce poverty and inequality. Some countries in Europe, such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, have managed to curb poverty and inequality by adjusting their policies.

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her intervention and congratulate her on her election to this Parliament.

One of the issues we have talked about today is seniors poverty. She mentioned and referenced the issue of concerns around newcomers as well.

The concerns we have on this side is that there clearly is more that can be done and should be done for seniors. I would like to know about some of the issues she heard about seniors in her riding during the campaign and what she thinks can be done and what should be done, and also about newcomers, because that was touched on as well. We have seen the government cut back on newcomer support. That is something that has affected many newcomers. I would like to have her comments on that particular subject.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member once again. During the campaign, I met many seniors in my riding. People are refusing to see their family members go to a nursing home to be taken care of. They want to do it themselves. They decide to work together. I met a family where two sisters decided to take care of their mother. Other people have decided to create multi-generational homes in order to be able to have elderly parents close by, especially if they are suffering from Alzheimer's or Parkinson's. They are then able to take care of their loved one and ensure that the person is receiving good care. These people also told me that the elderly need to be taken care of. But putting them in homes is too expensive and difficult, so it is better that they do it themselves.

[English]

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the record. When it comes to newcomers, our government has probably increased funding like no other government. We also took off the landing fee, which was a difficulty for many of the newcomers. There are many ways that we have actually improved settlement for newcomers.

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However, I would like to ask the member what she thinks of our plan to cut the deficit.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, many things can be done to help new immigrants. For example, a national anti-poverty strategy needs to be created, one that includes them and is based on targets and deadlines. As well, an action plan must be created in collaboration with the opposition, accountability must be ensured and official indicators of poverty need to be established.

[English]

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the government released the 2011-12 budget and, once again, it falls short for Canadians. The government continues to give away billions of dollars to the most profitable corporations while moving ahead with \$11 billion worth of cuts from programs and services that Canadians rely on.

Just recently, we heard of cuts to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans totalling \$56.8 million this year alone. This means that habitat conservation and monitoring will suffer. Most disturbing was the announcement that the Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador search and rescue centres will be moved to Halifax, jeopardizing the lives of countless people who make their living on the sea.

As Fisheries and Oceans critic for Canada's New Democrats and the official opposition, I am very concerned that the budget does not even mention the word "salmon", an iconic species in British Columbia that has faced many challenges over the last decade. I am concerned that with the cuts to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, it will become more difficult to protect our salmon and other aquatic species.

This budget contains little for the people of New Westminster—Coquitlam and Port Moody. This budget does nothing to address the \$574 million funding shortfall for the Evergreen Line. Many in my riding have dubbed this desperately needed transit project the "Nevergreen Line" as, after 20 years of delays, this line still has not come to fruition. As completion has again been pushed back to 2015. It is now being speculated that this may be the most delayed transportation project in the country. These delays are ridiculous.

People in the tri-cities are calling for the federal government to come back to the table, to sit down with the province and TransLink, our local government authority, and hash out a new funding formula that puts shovels in the ground this month. The Evergreen Line is the most pressing transportation infrastructure project in the Lower Mainland and, at the very least, deserves a mention in this budget.

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The government's strategic and operating review reveals that Infrastructure Canada is cutting \$45 million of green infrastructure funding, even as it stares down a \$123 billion municipal infrastructure deficit in this country. The green infrastructure fund is imperative if we are to move forward with transit and other green building initiatives. As a former city councillor, I know too well the lack of funding that cities face. It is an uphill battle and we must do more to invest in our cities. This budget fails to do that.

However, I am not surprised. This budget also does nothing to address the most pressing issue of our time: climate change. Canadians want the government to take action on climate change. The federal government needs to follow a path to lower carbon emissions. The government has consistently failed with regard to this environmental file.

Canada's New Democrats have proposed several initiatives that the government could take to demonstrate its commitment on this issue. The NDP has a plan to cap carbon, putting a price on carbon and establishing hard emission limits for Canada's largest polluters.

We have also put forward the climate change accountability act. In fact, it was re-introduced today by my hon. colleague, the member for Halifax. It would ensure that Canada meets the long-term target of reducing our greenhouse emissions to 80% below that of 1990 levels by the year 2050 and set interim targets between 2015 and 2045.

Canada's New Democrats also would like to see more emphasis on green and renewable energy. Canada could become a leader in this field if we dedicated the resources to developing it. Rather than subsidizing big oil, we should help businesses that are committed to making green investment. We could use the money that the government gives to large oil companies to invest in transit, household energy, conservation and renewable energy development.

One thing I will commend the Conservative government for is the renewal of the eco-energy retrofit program. I stood in the House in February of this year and called on the government to reinstate the program. The eco-energy retrofit program not only created jobs but helped working families make needed improvements to their homes. I am pleased that the Conservative government listened to the NDP and brought this program back. I think the Conservatives would do well to build and expand on this program.

• (1755)

When Canadians are asked what issue is most important to them, many say that it is health care. At the beginning of March, Canadians were horrified to hear of patients at the Royal Columbian Hospital in my riding being treated in a Tim Hortons donut shop. The Royal Columbian Hospital has been at the centre of several patient horror stories since it was forced to drastically increase its capacity in 2004 when Saint Mary's Hospital in New Westminster was shut down.

The federal government cannot sit back. It is time to act. It is time to protect our public health care system and provide adequate funding.

This budget does nothing to help front line health care workers. Too many Canadians are without a family doctor. I hear from people in my riding who cannot find a doctor who will take their family on and, instead, must rely on walk-in clinics with long wait lines, or use

the emergency room, which is a very expensive way to provide health care.

Canada's New Democrats are calling on the federal government to invest in public health care and to invest in the training and hiring of 1,200 new doctors and 6,000 new nurses, which would lessen the load in hospitals and save millions in health care costs in the long run.

The health care system faces many challenges and New Democrats have proposed solutions, such as a national pharmacare program so that people can get the medication they need at an affordable cost; and appropriate home care service so that seniors can stay in their home when they face chronic health care problems.

New Westminster—Coquitlam and Port Moody is a diverse riding, but one issue I hear consistently is that it is becoming more and more difficult to make ends meet. I am talking about affordability. My riding is home to many seniors and some live in poverty. Seniors living in poverty after working their whole lives building this country is unacceptable.

This budget provides only a \$300 million per year increase to the GIS. That is only \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This is less than half of what is needed to pull every Canadian senior out of poverty. It would not take much and it would go a very long way to help the seniors in this country to live in dignity. It is shameful that the government continues to provide corporate tax cuts and subsidize oil and gas companies when seniors in this country are living in poverty.

The Lower Mainland is one of the most expensive places to live and yet this budget fails to invest in affordable housing. Among all the world's major metropolitan areas, Vancouver has been ranked the third least affordable city. Residents across the Lower Mainland, including my constituents, struggle to secure safe, affordable housing. When will the government wake up and face the realities of the average Canadian, including the affordable housing struggle?

As we all know, the government made a backroom deal with B.C.'s provincial government to impose the harmonized sales tax, effectively shifting the tax burden from corporations to individuals. Hard-working citizens have been hard hit with this new tax, paying upwards of \$800 in additional taxes each year. Many seniors in my riding have written to express to me their frustration at how the HST has affected their already strained pocketbooks.

Instead of acknowledging their role in implementing this much hated tax, the federal government has shrugged off responsibility onto the provincial government. British Columbians know better and deserve better from the government.

• (1800)

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's comments and I thought there were a number of inaccuracies in what he said, but what concerned me the most were his comments relating to Fisheries and Oceans.

He commented on the \$56.8 million that is listed in the budget as reductions. I am concerned, and I heard this during the election campaign as well, when someone takes that number and then assumes that somehow habitat enforcement and monitoring and stock assessment and all of those things will be reduced.

Would the hon. member not agree that is really fearmongering when he has no idea what is involved or what that \$56.8 million is composed of?

In regard to Fisheries and Oceans' budget of about \$2 billion, does the hon. member or do his constituents really think that we cannot find less than 3% of a federal department's budget that is poorly spent and should be reduced?

• (1805)

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I would point out that this department has faced several cuts over the years and is really struggling to implement its mandate.

I have heard from so many fishers from coast to coast in different communities. I have heard from non-profit organizations. I have heard from many who say there is not adequate science or information. I have even heard from DFO workers in the field who are struggling to get the good information they need to make the decisions necessary to protect our fishery and make it a thriving, flourishing industry.

That is critical to providing a strong department and making that department work well.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-sor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to add to the exchange that just took place. I think the point that was levelled at my colleague in the NDP was that the \$56 million cut was just a little bit of flesh on the side, when in fact it is not, when we look at the total numbers.

For example, the parliamentary secretary accused him, and I assume he would accuse us of the same, of fearmongering. The Conservatives are closing a busier than average search and rescue centre. Fearmongering? Quite frankly, we have a right to be scared in the wake of that closure.

I would like to ask my colleague about the cuts at Fisheries and Oceans. Does he fear for certain programs? For instance, the Conservatives talked about small craft harbours and a lot of the infrastructure from coast to coast to coast. I would like him to comment on that, and the \$56 million cut in expenditures, as cutting to the bone.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate my hon. colleague's concerns, which I share. I think the cuts are making an already tough situation tougher.

It is nice to think that we could simply make a 3% cut across the board and all would be well, but try to tell that to community

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members who are struggling, whether in regard to restoration of our Pacific salmon or in regard to the privatization of the halibut fishery, which is a real concern, or in regard to search and rescue decisions where lives depend on having adequate response, and where in some places in this country the response time is already not at a satisfactory level, which Canadians are extremely concerned about. These cuts will only exacerbate the situation.

I have talked to a number of people who are concerned with the infrastructure for their harbours. Investment in harbours will decrease with the budget as opposed to increasing. That is the kind of investment we can look to with this budget.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Richmond—Arthabaska. While I am on my feet, allow me as well to congratulate you on your position in the chair. It is well-deserved, I might add.

Let me also take an opportunity to thank the good people of Essex, my riding back home, for what is now my third re-election to this chamber. I was the first Conservative MP in Essex in almost 50 years to have been elected back in 2004, and now the only Conservative MP since Confederation to be successfully elected in four consecutive terms.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jeff Watson: Thank you, to my colleagues.

Let me also thank and recognize that Canadians gave our Prime Minister and this government a very strong mandate. That includes a strong mandate from Essex as part of that.

I rise today in support of Bill C-3, our budget implementation bill, an act supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy. It is a budget that was in large measure originally tabled in March. The budget this time around is nearly identical to that one, with many benefits for the Windsor-Essex region back home and, of course, important benefits for Canada.

Bill C-3 and its measures build on our government's impressive record, a record where, for example, our economic action plan has created over 560,000 jobs in the last two years; where we have been on a low tax track for businesses, both small and large; where, during the downturn, stimulus was temporary, as we wanted it only to sustain us and to stimulate the economy at that time, not to create long-term structural deficits; a record where we paid down debt before we went into the great recession and one that will balance the budget or better by 2014; and a record that includes a 33% increase in funding to support public health care.

There are important new changes since the March budget. There is the beginning of the phasing out of the per-vote subsidy for political parties and also the beginning to set aside funds for the federal government's obligatory one-time transitional payment to Quebec for its impending decision to harmonize its retail sales tax with the goods and services tax. I am surprised, of course, that opposition MPs from Quebec voted against this measure when voting on the budget in principle. Such harmonization and the amount of the transitional payment, as I recall, were unanimously supported by the National Assembly in Quebec.

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The measures in Bill C-3 that are important for Windsor-Essex and for our country are first of all the very specifically articulated increased support in our budget for the Windsor-Essex parkway. That is the extension of Highway 401, where it currently ends outside the city of Windsor, to what will be a new international border crossing, a bridge between Windsor and Detroit. Our commitment in 2007, of course, was to fund up to 50% of the eligible capital costs of that particular project, a project that will create 12,000 jobs for one of the highest unemployment areas in Canada.

If I could take a step back, budget 2006 established our borders and gateway crossings fund, about \$2.1 billion. Budget 2007, which we termed "Advantage Canada", laid out a five page vision statement on the border crossing at Windsor and Detroit and in that budget we made a \$400 million down payment toward the Windsor-Essex parkway. As we see now in budget 2011, the current incarnation of our budget, we are promising up to \$1 billion to be set aside from that fund. So, that is a very critical one.

As I talk about our government's support for this project, I am disappointed to see that New Democrat members are opposed, particularly the two New Democrat MPs from Windsor West and Windsor—Tecumseh. They profess verbally to support the DRIC, the new international crossing, and the Windsor-Essex parkway that connects Highway 401 to that important crossing.

I will remind members that this is no minor infrastructure project. We talked about 12,000 jobs from the parkway, up to 30,000 jobs to be created by the parkway and the bridge crossing. It is the top infrastructure priority in Canada, supporting a huge bilateral trade relationship with the United States. These New Democrat members should have been standing in their place and voting for it in 2006, 2007, and now on budget 2011, and actually supporting this project.

• (1810)

If they had the courage of their convictions, where they say they support it, they should actually be standing, even if it means breaking ranks with their party to support our budget.

Second, what is important about our budget implementation?

It is good for industry. The accelerated capital cost writeoff, for example, was begun in 2006 under our government and was extended again in a later budget to 2011. Now, Bill C-3 extends that, our budget extends that for a further two years. It is timely for the retooling for our industries, our manufacturers, increasing their productivity precisely at a time where the Canadian dollar is high. Couple that with previous budget measures where we created a tariff-free zone for machinery imports and we have a perfect nexus, the perfect opportunity for our industries, particularly the machine, tool, die, and mould sector back home which supports not only the auto industry but the aerospace and other sectors. It is a perfect time. It is a historic boost, allowing them to continue their retooling, increasing their productivity and their competitiveness.

The boost of funding for the industrial research assistance program, IRAP, is a huge one. Our economic action plan gave a historic boost during the stimulus period for our businesses. We are continuing that with increases to the IRAP this time around.

Bill C-3 is good for rural Canada. How about more rural doctors and nurses, a new firefighters' tax credit, and new funding for agriculture, especially to improve food safety? All are very critical for rural Canada.

Our budget is obviously very good for seniors with an immediate boost to the guaranteed income supplement. I understand we are working against a very critical deadline of July 1 to get that critical funding to our poor seniors. This GIS measure represents continued progress on retirement security begun by this government with improved rules around direct benefit, direct contribution pensions, RRSPs, RRI's, our commitment with the provinces on a new pooled retirement pension plan and our continued ongoing talks with the provinces and territories over a modest enhancement to the CPP.

The opposition can join us in furthering retirement security by supporting our budget and this immediate boost to the guaranteed income supplement.

What else is in store from the government with respect to the budget?

How about an increase for Canada's summer jobs, an additional \$10 million a year during the stimulus period. Guess what? Now it is permanent. It is ongoing. That is 3,600 student summer jobs. That is not insignificant when they are looking for valuable skills that they can later take into full-time employment and beyond.

These measures are built on our government's record. We have had a low-tax plan for jobs since 2006, especially in 2007, a \$200 billion package over five years, not only for businesses but for consumers by lowering taxes, increasing disposable income for consumers to stimulate the economy and create jobs. We have our economic action plan, the stimulus that has created 560,000 jobs in the past two years. We are on a low-tax plan for our families saving \$3,000 per year for the average family of four. Our move to balance the budget will create the room for us to implement a family tax cut. With regard to income splitting, we did it for seniors with respect to their pensions. We are now going to do it for families. That is an incredible thing.

Our record includes strong support for the auto industry. In 2008, we established a national automotive strategy and we backed it with money. The first investment went to the Essex engine plant down our way to increase and expand the footprint of the automotive industry. It includes our investments in health care.

I will be supporting this bill. It supports rural Canada, our manufacturers and farmers. It will allow the immediate and timely boost to the guaranteed income supplement for our poor seniors. It supports the single largest infrastructure project in Ontario, the DRIC crossing and the Windsor-Essex Parkway, specifically.

I call on opposition members to support Bill C-3 with their conscience and also with their votes.

• (1815)

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a number of my Conservative colleagues mentioned that they did not want to use public moneys to fund political parties.

Can my colleague explain how tax credits for those who make a contribution to a political party—a minority of Canadians—are not funded by all Canadians? I know a number of people in my riding who are unhappy about their taxes funding the generous tax credit for wealthy contributors to the Conservative Party.

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the tax credit, it drives those who actually support a political party to put their money down on the line. They get a benefit from doing that. However, the difference is that we are phasing out the per vote subsidy. I do not know if it is indexed to inflation but it increases over time. It is an automatic payout by taxpayers who supports parties automatically whether they agree with them or not.

For those who actually have the guts to put their dollars down, they get some benefit back. I think that is an incentive to encourage us, but it is also an incentive for the political parties to go out and hustle and create a platform, create something that appeals to people so they will want to give to that party. We have done that successfully, much better than the opposition.

• (1820)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is in regard to the home retrofit program, a program that is supposed to be assisting many thousands of Canadians, and no doubt this year it will. The qualifier there is that it is for this year.

Ultimately, many would argue that a multi-year program of this nature would have been far better in terms of job creation. He talked in his speech about the importance of the creation of jobs, particularly when we look at small business. By having a multi-year program that looks at retrofitting homes, there would have been more of a commitment to those long-term jobs with many of those small businesses.

Why would it not have been a multi-year program?

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for a promotion I guess I did not know I had earned. Perhaps he could tell the Prime Minister and put in a good word for me.

All kidding aside, I wish the hon. member had been here much earlier in the 40th Parliament when previous budgets were presented. The eco-energy retrofit for homes was a multi-year program. Had the member been part of the Liberal Party at that time, he would have opposed it like the rest of his colleagues did.

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This is just simply an additional year on what was a multi-year program, a very successful one I might add. Thank God it is back to provide some more jobs this year.

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say how pleased I was to hear from the member for Essex. He has been a real champion, particularly for probably one of the largest infrastructure programs that this government has and any in recent memory will endeavour.

I want to warn him that, if his NDP neighbours are anything like the ones up in northwestern Ontario, they will vote against it but they will also take credit for it. I just want to let him know in advance that this is something that goes on all the time.

The member in his great speech alluded to the 12,000 jobs that the project itself will contribute to the economy. I just wondered if he could talk about the economic advantages beyond the 12,000 jobs that we will see just to set up this infrastructure and how disappointing it will be for the people from the ridings represented by members of the NDP when they vote against this.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, we just came through an election campaign where the NDP opponents were taking full credit in their literature for having secured 100% of the funding. What is funny is that one cannot secure the funding if one actually votes against the funding. That is a bit of a curious oddity.

It is a huge project, not just for the immediate jobs but, ultimately, end to end, from the 401 to the I-75 in Michigan. A multi-billion dollar project. Even if a fraction of that goes into the economy as additional stimulus over the next five to seven years of construction, it will be a huge boom to Windsor Essex county. Of course, by having a redundant crossing, it secures our bilateral trade relationship with the United States and, on our side of the border, puts us in a position to secure long-term business investments worth millions and millions of dollars. New companies will start up because they have predictability at the corridor.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I call upon the hon. member, I wish to inform him that I will be interrupting his speech at 6:30 p.m., for that is when the time allowed for this debate will expire.

The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Essex for agreeing to share his time with me. I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Bloc Québécois to speak to Bill C-3, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011, introduced on June 14. The bill consists of 12 parts, one of which is very attractive for Quebec. I am talking about part 8, which directly concerns Quebec and its government, since it provides a payment of \$368.9 million for equalization.

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That is just one more reason for me and my Bloc Québécois colleagues to support this budget, especially since it already provides \$2.2 billion in compensation for our sales tax harmonization. Of course, we could not pass that up. I have been a member in this House for seven years now, and this will probably be the third time I have voted in favour of a budget. Every time, the only reason I voted for it was because it was in the best interests of Quebecers. The people of Quebec have sent us to the House of Commons to represent their interests, to stand up for them. When budget 2006 provided \$3.3 billion in 2006 for the fiscal imbalance, voting against it was out of the question. For the same reason, we will support this budget here today.

With any budget, we must be careful. The government will always say that its budget is perfect, that all of the measures are wonderful and that there are no shortcomings, while the opposition will find everything that is wrong with it, criticize the measures and always say that it does not go far enough. In the House, we must take stock and weigh the pros and cons of a budget before voting. In this case, there are a number of shortcomings in the budget, and I will perhaps have time to list a few of them. However, in weighing the pros and cons, members from Quebec cannot, in good conscience, vote against a budget like this. Members will recall the long battle waged by the Bloc Québécois and the Government of Quebec regarding the \$2.2 billion for tax harmonization.

The Government of Quebec harmonized its sales tax with that of the federal government in 1992. However, only Ontario, the Maritimes and British Columbia received several billion dollars in compensation, while Quebec was left waiting, supposedly for administrative reasons. I am wondering why the federal government did not act before now, particularly since this measure was in the budget before the election was called; the Bloc Québécois would have immediately supported the budget. The Conservative government, a minority government at that time, would then have been assured that it would keep its place. We likely would not have had an election, as we unfortunately did over these past few months. Everyone was saying that an election costs a lot of money and that it was the fault of the opposition. The Conservative government had the opportunity to prevent an election. We can look back and replay the past but it does not do much good.

As a result of pressure from the Bloc Québécois and the Government of Quebec, an announcement was made during the election campaign that \$2.2 billion in compensation would be allocated in the budget. I am not the type to be content with the answer that the cheque is in the mail. We therefore waited to see whether that money would be in the budget, in black and white. It is, and we are very happy about it.

However, like the hon. member for Essex, I question the reaction of the NDP MPs from Quebec who have decided to ignore the measure giving Quebec \$2.2 billion in compensation. This measure will help not only the Government of Quebec, but all Quebecers. The NDP MPs have decided not to support the budget. They will have to answer for their actions and explain to their constituents why they disregarded this measure by voting against the budget.

The hon. member mentioned some examples from his own region, where the MPs also decided not to support the budget. It is an

entirely democratic choice, but I was rather shocked to see that many of the NDP MPs from Quebec decided to reject this measure.

• (1825)

There are other interesting measures, including some for seniors, namely \$300 million to help seniors living in poverty. The measure having to do with the guaranteed income supplement is a step in the right direction.

That is another lengthy battle we waged in the House. The Bloc Québécois moved a number of motions to improve the guaranteed income supplement. The math is not hard: another \$110 a month is needed to lift the least fortunate out of poverty. It is not going to make them rich. Now there is talk of \$50 a month; the necessary amount has not been reached, but I have to say that at least this is a step in the right direction for the least fortunate seniors.

As the member for Richmond—Arthabaska, this also makes me want to vote in favour of the budget. That is not to say that the battle is over, that we can sit back and finally say that the guaranteed income supplement issue has been resolved. It is not resolved, especially since there is a shortfall of \$60 a month and we also want—

• (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. It being 6:30 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[English]

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

• (1855)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 7)

YEAS

Members

Adams

Ablonczy

Government Orders

Adler	Albrecht	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Aloxander	Allen (Welland)	Mulcair	Nantel
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison	Nash	Nicholls
Amblar	Ambrose	Norlock	O'Connor
Anders	Anderson	O'Neill Gordon	Obhrai
Angus	Armstrong	Oliver	Opitz
Ashfield	Aspin	Paradis	Patry
Atamanenko	Aubin	Payne	Péclét
Ayala	Baird	Penashue	Perreault
Bateman	Bellavance	Plamondon	Poiliève
Benoit	Benskin	Preston	Quach
Bevington	Bezan	Rafferty	Raït
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe	Rajotte	Rathgeber
Blaney	Block	Ravignat	Raynault
Boivin	Boughen	Reid	Rempel
Braid	Breitkreuz	Richards	Richardson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Rickford	Ritz
Brown (Barrie)	Brunoogoe	Rousseau	Saganash
Butt	Calandra	Sandhu	Savoie
Calkins	Carman	Saxton	Schellenberger
Carmichael	Caron	Seckback	Sellah
Carrie	Cash	Shea	Shipley
Charlton	Chisholm	Shery	Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Chisu	Chong	Smith	Sopuck
Choquette	Chow	Sorenson	Stanton
Christopherson	Clarke	Stewart	Storeth
Cleary	Comartin	Strahl	Sullivan
Côté	Crowder	Sweet	Thibault
Cullen	Daniel	Tilson	Toet
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Toews	Toone
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day	Tremblay	Trost
Dechert	Del Mastro	Trottier	Truppe
Devolin	Dewar	Turnell	Twedd
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly	Uppal	Van Kesteren
Doré Lefebvre	Dreshen	Van Loan	Vellacott
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Wallace	Warawa
Dussault	Dyksira	Warkentin	Watson
Fantino	Fast	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Weston (Saint John)	Williamson
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Godin	Goguen		
Goldring	Goodyear		
Gosal	Gourde		
Gravelle	Grewal		
Grogg	Harper		
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)	Bélanger	Bennett
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hassainia	Casey	Coderre
Hawn	Hayes	Cotler	Cuzner
Hobert	Hilleyer	Dion	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Hoback	Hocppner	Easter	Eyking
Holder	Hughes	Footo	Fry
Jacob	James	Garneau	Goodale
Jean	Julian	Hsu	Karygiannis
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Koddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Lamoureux	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Kellyway	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	MacAulay	McCallum
Kent	Kerr	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Murray
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Pacetti	Rac
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MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie		
Mai	Marston		
Martin	Masse		
Mathysen	May		
Mayes	McColeman		
McLeod	Menegakis		
Menzies	Merrifield		
Miller	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)		
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)		
Moore (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)		

NAYS

Members

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

The Speaker: It being 6:59 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24.

(The House adjourned at 6:59 p.m.)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS
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CANADA



House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 146 • NUMBER 010 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, June 16, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 16, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (0955)

[*English*]

AIR SERVICE OPERATIONS LEGISLATION

Hon. Lisa Raitt (for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, a bill in the name of the Minister of Labour, entitled An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of air service operations, shall be disposed of as follows: (a) commencing when the said bill is read a first time and concluding when the said bill is read a third time, the House shall not adjourn except pursuant to a motion proposed by a Minister of the Crown; (b) the said bill may be read twice or thrice in one sitting; (c) after being read a second time, the said bill shall be referred to a Committee of the Whole; and (d) during consideration of the said bill, no division shall be deferred.

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Our goal has always been to make the best possible use of our time here, and after discussion with the deputy government House leader, we would like to suggest that we suspend our sitting this morning for a few minutes, if there is unanimous consent, so that we can verify one last point that could substantially affect the arrangement of the business of the House. It would be in the interests of the institution and would ensure the best use of our time today. The government is in agreement on this, because we are waiting for news that could have a significant impact.

• (1005)

[*English*]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just to add to and underscore what my colleague, the House leader of the official opposition, said, I do not think the delay should be more than five minutes. It just allows us to consult with a few people. It may be in the best interest of Parliament to do so. We would certainly agree for a very brief suspension if this meets the approval and the consent of all parties involved.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would make the assumption that we are talking about conferring with all political parties inside the chamber.

The Speaker: This seems to be a request for unanimous consent to suspend the sitting for five minutes.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, just to clarify, I have no intention to block the unanimous consent. I would just like to ensure that I am included in the consultations.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to suspend the sitting to the call of the Chair?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 10:06 a.m.)

• (1010)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 10:12 a.m.)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just weeks ago our government indicated in the Speech from the Throne that our priorities remain focused on jobs and growth. We also noted that the global economy remains fragile and risks to our recovery persist.

This week, a long simmering labour dispute at Air Canada has resulted in a work stoppage, an event that, if left unresolved, could jeopardize Canada's economic prosperity. Approximately 3,800 of the air carrier's customer, sales and service agents, represented by the National Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers Union of Canada, otherwise known as CAW Local 2002, have walked off the job.

This involves more than the viability of Air Canada's daily operations as an air carrier and as the country's number one transporter of air cargo. It also raises the stakes on the ongoing health of our economy, the future of job growth, and the prosperity of all Canadians. I am very concerned about the effect this strike will have on Canada's economic recovery and on Canadians in general. The strike could have a serious economic impact, not in a matter of weeks or months but in a matter of days.

Government Orders

Canadians gave this government a strong mandate to complete our economic recovery. As Canada's labour minister, it is my view that the Government of Canada must take decisive action now before real damage is done to our economy. That is why our government has put legislation on notice to ensure continuing air service for passengers.

Unlike some members in this House, I will respect the rules of the House and refrain from speaking to the content of the legislation that has been put on notice, until such time as parliamentary procedure permits.

I see this labour dispute at Air Canada as one requiring a very clear and decisive response from Parliament. There are three reasons for this: first, this process has gone on without resolution for far too long; second, time is of the essence to respond with appropriate measures; and third, there is an economic imperative to take action before real harm is done to prosperity, to growth, and to job creation in this country.

Let me take the next few minutes to expand on each of these three points.

With regard to the duration of this process, the facts tell us that every avenue has been exhausted in a way to resolve the dispute between the parties. These parties have been at odds over pensions and wages for quite some time now, actually dating back to 2003 when Air Canada first entered bankruptcy protection.

Since early March of this year, the parties have engaged in negotiations to renew the CAW-Air Canada collective agreement. Through my portfolio's Labour Canada program, mediators from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service were appointed to help the parties at the table. As a result, the mediators presided over efforts to continue to bring the parties closer to an agreement, from May 24 to June 13. Meanwhile, workers voted in favour of taking strike action.

According to CAW, that vote involved 80% of its members of Local 2002. Despite some measures of progress that were made through mediation, an acceptable resolution to the parties was not found in time to avoid a work stoppage. So, on June 14, these workers opted to walk off the job. Doing so, this has triggered a new chapter in the labour dispute, one in which others, third parties and the Canadian public, are put at risk of real economic harm.

Therefore, the time has come for Parliament to do the right thing. We must intervene and we must do so now. There are some members in this House who might think we have been hasty in our response, but we have not. The health of Canada's economy, the livelihood of families, the competitiveness of businesses, and the reputation of Canada as a reliable trading partner are all on the line.

•(1015)

I take all of these things very seriously and I have acted accordingly.

Some argue that there is a process to follow and that we ought to give the parties more time to resolve their dispute. However, the order of events that I have outlined demonstrates that a process has been followed. Every resource and support was offered to the parties to mutually resolve their dispute through collective bargaining.

Unfortunately, those efforts were unfruitful and now time is of the essence to respond.

What we are now facing is a labour dispute that threatens to put the economic well-being of our country at risk. Canadians will not stand for this, nor will international marketplaces.

At this point in time, there is no benefit to waiting before taking action. Work has stopped at Air Canada in a key area of its operations, and that comes with a cost. What remains to be seen is just how much a price will be paid and who will be carrying that burden. Should it be business travellers who count on Air Canada for their livelihood? What about Canadians in remote areas who rely on the carrier for a range of goods? Should families and leisure travellers be the ones to pay the price as Canada heads into the busy tourism season? What about the possible repercussions on industries that rely on air cargo as an important part of how they earn a living? Is it reasonable to call on these Canadians who are not party to the dispute to put their affairs on hold? No, it is not.

Should we wait until uncertainty makes it impossible for citizens to count on Air Canada? Should we wait until all the hard-earned gains in our economy are undermined, sending all of us back to harder times? Again, the answer is no. That would be a terrible price to pay for indecision.

That is why we must act and why we have acted. This is not about taking sides in a dispute. Rather, it is about what Canadians have every right to expect what its Parliament is to do: step in when the economy of our nation is put at risk.

As noted in the Speech from the Throne, our government will remain focused on what matters to Canadians most, which is good jobs, security for our families and a prosperous future. It is for those key reasons that I have outlined in my remarks today that I maintain that the government must respond to this labour dispute in a manner consistent with what it has done before when faced with a situation that can imperil our economy.

Canadians are counting on their government to do the right thing. We owe it to each and every one of them to not let them down.

•(1020)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's comments on this particular topic. However, with the collective voice of organized labour, the consensus is that this has been the single biggest sucker punch that organized labour has received in years. This legislation was moved, not days or weeks but hours after the deadline passed.

We see no great delays in air travel in this country. We have heard no public outcry as a result of this. What we have seen is a government taking action. Air Canada is a private company and it does not hold a monopoly in this country. There are various options for air travellers within this country that could be pursued. We see the action that is being taken here but, during the impasse with Canada Post, which is a crown corporation, the government sat back.

Government Orders

This has been a blow to the head of collective bargaining in this country. The government has taken away a right from employees, the front line workers, who really went above and beyond to help in the resurrection of Air Canada. Is this what we can expect from the government going forward?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is asking why we are acting now. As I said in my opening remarks, it is because we knew the disturbance that would happen in a number of days would be extremely significant to the national economy and on the travelling public.

Throughout this process there have been negotiations at the table. I have had conversations with both CAW and Air Canada on the topic. One of the key questions that I asked at the beginning concerned what the effect would be if they got into the situation of a work stoppage.

Both parties separately, of their own volition, gave me the same information. They said that at the beginning of a work disturbance or stoppage they would be able to cope, that they would have managers available who were trained quickly to substitute for the unionized employees, but that there would be a finite amount of time that could possibly happen successfully.

In both cases, they estimated that it would be between seven and nine days before there would be an almost complete shutdown of the system. That is what we are talking about. Therefore, we acted accordingly in anticipation of the economic disturbance that would happen in that case. We did so and we put notice on the order paper in order to proceed as quickly as we could.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many of the people in my riding work for Air Canada and their families depend on the benefits and salaries provided by that company.

I agree with the hon. member that this event has the potential to hurt the economic well-being of our nation. However, it also hurts the long-term economic well-being of families in my riding when things like pensions are not supported and aid to the workers is not supported by the government.

What can the government do to help the workers in the long term to benefit their prosperity?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I share the same concerns with our constituents.

With respect to the situation right now, one critical aspect of this is that it would give certainly to Air Canada employees, the general public and businesses that there is a finite amount of time that there will be a work stoppage so they can make their plans and will not be adversely affected.

I can also say that it is important for the House to remember that, even as we debate the motion here in terms of procedure, there is the opportunity and ability for both parties to be at the bargaining table. I understand they are there now. I would ask that the parties do their best diligence so that we can avoid having the debate to follow with respect to back to work legislation and that the two parties can reach a deal that is beneficial for their employees, brothers, sisters and Canadians in general.

• (1025)

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you for achieving the position of Speaker. I am sure that you will do great things.

We have a government that is putting forward legislation at the beginning of a dispute where negotiations may not be going the right way and people are threatening to walk out. The government steps in right away and says that it will establish back-to-work legislation. A strike has not taken place as of yet and the parties are still at the table. The public has not been affected. Air Canada has been sending out the message that should something happen, it will be able to continue its service.

Air Canada is a private company looking after its own affairs. Without a large outcry by the public, why is the government stepping in right away and saying that the employees need to get back to work or it will use a heavy-handed approach? Is this the way the government will continue business from here on, at the back of the unions? Is the government not recognizing the unions, what they have done and their struggle? Does it not have any respect for the people who are unionized, the people who are running the unions and the people who are paying union dues?

I would like to get a clear answer from the minister. Is this the way the government will act from now on, with total disrespect for the union and the union movement in this country?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I should let the House know that my mother is a dues-paying, card-carrying union member of CAW as well. I, therefore, have great respect for the movement and I take the matter very seriously.

The question of why we are acting now goes to the heart of why we are acting quickly. It always comes back to the economy.

We have been intensely discussing the matter with the parties over the past number of months. Should a strike or a lockout occur there would be a serious effect on the travelling public and on the economy. They anticipated that would be seven days. If we look through the history of legislation, we can see that oftentimes it takes between seven and nine days to deal with matters of such importance. We thought it would be more appropriate to put the notice on the order paper in anticipation of what would happen. It is no different from other back to work legislation in the past.

Since 1950, the House has passed back to work legislation 32 times. A number of those times have been with respect to private companies. However, the remaining factor that binds them all is the national significance of the work stoppage and the effect on the Canadian population. Those two factors guided us in our deliberations on this matter. We take it very seriously.

I will make one last point. Our role in Labour Canada is to facilitate and prevent these things from happening and over 90% of the time we are successful.

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in her speech, the minister said:

*Government Orders**[English]*

"Hard-earned gains in our economy would be compromised, sending us back to harder times".

If that is the minister's priority, why does she have nothing against removing the hard-earned gains of workers and sending them back to harder times?

How is it possible for the government not to realize that it is thanks to the sacrifices of workers, who, notably, have foregone wages that were taken in the form of a pension that was guaranteed to them for the future? Now, the employer is taking out everything it can from the company. Tens of millions of dollars have been paid to executives in bonuses. The bosses receive huge protected pensions and now we are attacking the workers' rights. How is that fair? How can that be a priority of any Canadian government?

● (1030)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, under our charter, we do have the right to free collective bargaining. The courts are well settled on that matter, and we respect that. We are saying that we are interested in seeing what the effect will be on the economy. We are concerned about that and we are concerned about the effect on the average Canadian. That also matters.

This is not just about the parties at the table attempting to attain a deal through the collective bargaining process. It is about when that process breaks down and results in a work stoppage that has that effect. That is where it is appropriate for the government to step in. We have done it, as I said, 32 times in the past number of years since 1950. It is the appropriate action in this case as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by saying that I think the government's position on this issue is regrettable. The minister stated that the two parties told her that in nine days, if there was no agreement, there would be a strike and everything would shut down.

Is the minister saying that Air Canada has been lying to its customers? Take a look at the Air Canada site. Air Canada is even sending emails to its customers to say that there are no problems, that delays are no longer than 15 minutes, that everything is going well and that there is no cause for concern.

I do not understand why some people are claiming that in nine days, everything will shut down, while Air Canada is telling its customers that everything is fine, that there are no problems and that customers can continue flying. Air Canada is bragging about this.

Air Canada told the minister this. I have reason to believe what the minister says, that Air Canada said that. Why would Air Canada have said that? Because Air Canada wanted the government to bring in legislation to force workers back to work.

In reality, Air Canada does not have this problem because it emailed all of its customers—unless I am its only customer—to say that all is well. I have been receiving these emails and I am sure that other members here in the House have been as well. I see members who are saying that they have received them, too. I wonder if any government members have received them. I wonder if the minister received the email from Air Canada saying that everything is fine.

Air Canada is telling its customers that all is well. And if that is the case, I will believe the emails I am receiving.

The minister herself just said that Air Canada told her that if the strike had not ended in nine days, Canada's air transportation system would shut down. However, Air Canada is not the only airline in the world. Air Canada is not the only airline in Canada. It is a private company.

Speaking of economic recovery, last night I took part in a CBC broadcast with a member who said that the government received a clear mandate from Canadians to make economic recovery its priority. So I asked this: if economic recovery is a priority, will the government give preference to companies that are going to reduce wages and make huge cuts to employee pensions? I asked if that would be good for the economic recovery and for our future generations. Our children, the future generations, would not enjoy the same salaries we have enjoyed. Why? Because former Air Canada president Robert Milton doubled his salary to a total of \$14.7 million when things were not going well at Air Canada. The former president of Air Canada, Mr. Milton, left the country with \$82.7 million. He left with all that money. He had no problems with Air Canada at the time. Yet, it was a time when there were plenty of problems at Air Canada.

I very clearly heard the Minister of Labour say that this has been going on for some time. Things are not going well at Air Canada. Meanwhile, Air Canada appointed a new president and is paying him \$7 million a year, not to mention the fact that it is also going to give him a pension. The new president has nothing to worry about. He is going to come away with a guaranteed, set pension of \$350 million a year.

An hon. member: You mean \$350,000.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Pardon me, yes, \$350,000. He would have liked my numbers. No worries; the president of Air Canada is not going to get \$350 million, but rather \$350,000 a year.

What does the government think of that? It says that such people are hard to find. I cannot say for sure, but I think there are people who would take the job for less than that, especially since the company is always whining about how much trouble it is in.

Let us come back to the government's motion. I was talking about Air Canada, but let us look at Canada Post. Canada Post is in the process of negotiating a collective agreement with its employees. They are at the bargaining table. There is no problem; they are negotiating.

• (1035)

Basically, in the negotiation process, employees have the right to vote in favour of strike action or to go on a rotating strike, which is what they did. But Canada Post was not happy, because it wanted the employees to go on a full strike. Is it normal for a crown corporation to want its employees to go on strike? The reason is because it wanted the government to legislate the employees back to work. Is it normal for a crown corporation to want the government to legislate its employees back to work? There is only one possible reason for this: the government has something to gain. The minister said earlier that this was not about taking sides. Why do corporations like Air Canada and Canada Post have the benefit of back-to-work legislation? Because it is to their advantage.

The game the government is starting to play is very dangerous. If it sends a clear message to Canadians that it has no choice because its mandate is to promote economic recovery and that is all it cares about, in that case, workers better fasten their seat belts. That means that the government will not stop at Air Canada and Canada Post. It means this is just the beginning and it will always do this in the future.

Let us not forget why there is a union and why the right to free bargaining and the right to strike exist. These things exist to avoid a repeat of what happened in the 1930s, when everyone had to take to the streets to defend their rights. Workers had to organize. Together, they established a mechanism that won legal recognition. There is legislation in place that gives the right to free bargaining and the right to strike. However, Air Canada workers do not have that right. It is being taken away from them before the bargaining period even ends.

It is the same thing for Canada Post. The law says that citizens have to receive their mail every day. What is Canada Post doing to provoke the workers? It has started having mail delivered three days a week only, suggesting there was not enough volume in the Canada Post depots to justify daily mail delivery.

The letter carrier does not come to our house every day. The legislation does not say that letter carriers come only when there is enough mail and their mailbag is full. It says that citizens will receive their mail. Canada Post reacts by reining in its workers and having them work three days a week in order to make the public suffer, in the hope that the public becomes outraged and cries wolf. The government then claims it is bowing to public pressure and has no choice but to introduce special legislation in the House. We have yet to hear anything from the public. I am not hearing the public crying wolf. It is the same thing for Air Canada. I have not heard the public complaining, but the government is already introducing back-to-work legislation.

• (1040)

[English]

How can the government claim it is doing this in the best interests of Canadians? Is it saying that workers are not Canadian, that the whole workforce is not Canadian? The men and women who get up in the morning, build this country and work hard, are they not Canadian?

Government Orders

The government is saying that in the best interests of Canadians it is going to interfere in the negotiations, that it will help businesses to ensure that pension plans are not kept and employers to reduce the wages of workers. And the government is saying that it is doing this in the best of Canadians? Well, I hope workers are considered Canadians.

This is not in the best interests of Canadians. It is the wrong thing to do. For the government to get involved and legislate people back to work is the wrong message to send to industry and crown corporations, because now they do not have to do anything in negotiations and just let the government come in and do it for them.

Where is free bargaining? Where is the right to strike? Is it a sin to go on strike? It is not a sin. It is a fundamental right that workers have under the law.

I am talking directly to the people of our country. How would Canadians like it if tomorrow the government brought their wages down? How would they like it if their pensions were taken away? How would they like it if, after working all their lives and are 60 or 65 years-old, the company that had used them all along in production was enriched by it, like Mr. Robert Milton who walked away with \$87 million and all those other CEOs getting paid millions of dollars in wages, but who say to workers when they retire they do not care if they go on welfare, that they do not care if the workers have a poor life, that they do not care if the workers get nothing for a good retirement? So many people have called my office and said they cannot even afford to pay their bills or engage in even a little recreation or travel.

Is that the direction we are going in? Is that what the Conservative government is promoting now? It is not even waiting for the negotiations to finish and giving them some time.

There is no crisis. Air Canada itself said there was no crisis. Air Canada said that the longest delays were about 15 minutes long at airports. Well, they are beating their record, because as members know, sometimes we have to wait half an hour or an hour for a plane. Air Canada is saying now that delays are no longer than 15 minutes. They are getting better.

An hon. member: Relax.

Mr. Yvon Godin: My friend said, "relax". I do not relax when I talk in defence of workers.

It is not enough that we have a law for free bargaining and a law on the right to strike, because the government is putting time limits on debates in the House of Commons, the house of the citizens, to stop members from talking in defence of the rights of these workers. That is what this motion is all about: the government will not let the House of Commons speak but is using time limits.

This is wrong. There are 308 members in the House and they all have the right to get up and speak on this. That is what this House is all about. Putting time limits on this debate is wrong. It is wrong to stop debate in the House, which is why we were elected. We were elected to come to the House of Commons and debate these important issues.

Government Orders

These issues are very important. It is important when the government gets involved in private sector negotiations to dictate how they will go. The law already dictates how these should go: free negotiations and the right to strike in order to come to a collective agreement.

●(1045)

If the government gets involved in the collective agreement and gets the people back to work, from past experience, I know this is not good practice. The two parties need to sit at the table and agree to a contract. The two parties need to shake hands, go back to work and have good labour relations. That is what we need.

They do not need somebody forcing this. Let us just think about this individually. How would members like to be forced to do something? Nobody likes to have things forced on them. The two parties have to come to an agreement, a voluntary agreement where the parties sit and negotiate.

Personally I have negotiated 35 collective agreements. I would never have wanted someone to come into the negotiations and tell the parties how things should go. It would take away the rights of the negotiator and the rights of the workers.

The government has a majority. We have not seen the bill yet. Maybe the bill will say that Air Canada cannot reduce the pensions of its employees or cut their wages and that it should have its employees return to work. That would be a change from what we have always seen, but I do not think it will happen. I have never seen that happen.

I remember in 1997 when we voted on the back to work legislation for the postal workers, which I voted against. In 1997 the Liberals had a majority government. They voted for the workers to return to work before they had even voted on their contract. There was no vote on the contract, but there already was a bill before the House to have them return work, and it was not even a strike vote.

What is wrong with those two parties? What do they have against workers?

[Translation]

It is all well and good to pat yourself on the back and say that the government is wrong, but I remember that in 1997, a member removed his jacket in the House of Commons and wanted to fight a postal worker who was in the gallery because the worker was unhappy that a bill was forcing him to return to work. And they had not yet even voted. It is in Hansard.

I am asking the government to rethink its actions. It must first get involved in the negotiations since this is not a crisis situation. It is not true that this affects the economic recovery. The economic recovery will be affected when companies start to cut employee pensions. With regard to the long-term economic recovery, and I am not talking about something that is going to happen tomorrow morning, if workers are unable to negotiate decent collective agreements and to live comfortably, we have not done the right thing. It is not the government's job to get involved in the private sector's business as it is doing right now. If the government wants to do so, it must go and speak to Canada Post. In fact, the postal workers' union told the government that if Canada Post recognized

its former collective agreement, it would be prepared to stop the rotating strike and return to the bargaining table. Canada Post refused. What Canada Post is doing is wrong.

Last night, I received a call from one of my colleagues. He told me that a northern Ontario newspaper had been sent to Canada Post for distribution. Canada Post then announced the lockout. The newspaper office contacted Canada Post to find out whether it could retrieve its papers and distribute them itself. Canada Post refused, arguing that the union did not want such action to be taken. The newspaper office spoke to the union about retrieving the papers and distributing them. The union said that it was not a problem and that the newspaper office could have them back. The newspaper office went back to Canada Post to say that the union did not have a problem with returning the papers. Canada Post responded that the papers had become its property and refused to return them. I hope that the minister is listening to what I am saying. I intend to go and see her after my speech. Why is Canada Post keeping people's mail? It is to upset people.

Canada Post wants people to get angry so the government will impose collective agreements, which goes against our democratic principles and our laws. That is completely unacceptable. What does Canada Post have against these workers? It is not a private company, but a crown corporation. It posted a profit of \$281 million last year. Canada Post is not there to make a profit, but to provide a service to Canadians. All the better if it made \$281 million, but how can it justify withdrawing a benefit such as the drug plan from its workers? I asked a question in the House of Commons when it cut the drug plan for workers on sick leave. There was a CBC report about a woman with cancer who had to stop her treatments because of that. Where is the human side of Canada Post?

I asked Canada Post if I could tour its Laval facility to see what is involved in the work of its employees. It was not a problem on Monday or Tuesday. However, on Wednesday, I received a call telling me that I would not be not allowed to visit the facility where employees work. I asked why not and if Canada Post had something to hide.

●(1050)

If I were in Canada Post's position and had nothing to hide, I would have suggested that I go see the workers. Canada Post said that the workers were happy and content. We could have gone to see them together. But no, Canada Post refused.

That is why I am saying that the government has a role to play. It should tell Canada Post and Air Canada that they should not expect it to come to their assistance and that they should settle the dispute in accordance with their collective agreements and the laws of this land.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst for his comments. He clearly shares our opinion that the government has used an unduly rigorous approach with these two companies, Air Canada and Canada Post.

In 1997, the Liberal government intervened after an 11-day strike. In the two cases here today, there is no strike. It is a completely different situation.

Government Orders

If, after a certain period of time, there comes a point where the two parties are unable to reach a settlement, does my colleague think that the government would have just cause to intervene as it did prematurely today?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, in 1997, I was here in the House of Commons when we voted on that measure. There was no strike at that point, and the contract had not even been signed. There was a vote here in the House and I could have the record brought up. It may have been another time, not 1997, when there was no strike but there was a vote in the House of Commons. Mr. St-Julien even took off his suit jacket and was ready to fight with the postal workers.

The real question is whether there should be a minimum length of time before the government intervenes. Does the Liberal Party think that one or two days is not long enough but that nine days is okay? Then companies would only have to wait nine days. The Liberals are saying the same thing as the Conservatives—that it is just a question of time.

But the opposite is true. These companies need to understand that they must negotiate. Employees have the right to strike and the companies have the right to lock them out. They should use those rights and resolve the issues. That is the only way to solve these problems; otherwise, the government gets involved. If the government wants to get involved, it should provide mediators who are able to negotiate with both parties but do not impose legislation the way the Liberals and Conservatives have both done.

• (1055)

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Acadie—Bathurst for his very passionate defence of the rights of workers in our country.

What does the member think this kind of legislation means in terms of the commitment to the collective bargaining process by the government? What does he think it means in the lives of workers when they have spent many years with the company, making sacrifices as they have gone along, particularly with Air Canada and its almost bankrupt situation a few years ago? What does it mean to workers when they have put so many years into a company, then just as they think they might be facing retirement, to be told that the benefits they have worked so hard for and that they have paid into could be stripped away from them?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, it is tough for them. The minute a third party comes in and decides what will be in the collective agreement, it helps a company to go one way and it helps it succeed in beating the workers, who have no defence because the government has come in with a law.

What does it say to the whole world? What does it say to all those companies in the forestry industry that closed their plants after so many years and to the people who worked in those plants and paid into their pension plans?

When people go to negotiation, that is the way it goes. They could negotiate upfront the money they will get. If they want \$1 increase, they will get that dollar right away. That is safe. That is put in their pockets right away. However, they may ask that a portion of that \$1 be put aside for their pension plans, so when they retire, they will

have good lives with their families, realizing they have spent more time with their employers than their families.

The workers then might want to retire after 30 years. They check their pensions to find out that the 20¢ they had asked the employer to put on their pensions is gone. What the company has done, not the government because I am not allowed to say it, is stolen the money from the workers. It has walked away with it. This is unfair to the men and women who have built our country.

This is totally unfair and unacceptable. That is why I say that government has no right to get involved.

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to inform the government that all the members of this House share its concerns for the economy. However, I believe that the fundamental question here is whether the government believes that, in Canada, by definition, workers' rights are a hindrance to the economy. The way the government is intervening immediately and being so heavy-handed from the outset, when Air Canada itself says there has not been enough disruption to flights to cause its clients any concern, is a way of telling the unions in Canada that the government will always side with the employer before the bargaining process can even run its course.

My party is not against government intervention when we see that essential services might be affected, that Canadians might suffer from the situation and that the economy might be affected. However, we believe the role of the government, as much as possible, is to encourage the partners to find a negotiated solution and not to intervene from the very start as it is doing right now.

We believe that with the two strikes going on right now at Canada Post and at Air Canada, the government wants to send a message to all salaried employees in—

The Speaker: I must interrupt the hon. member to give the floor to the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst for a very short answer.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, in the case of Canada Post, the letter carriers have said they are prepared to ensure all essential services. They are prepared to deliver all the old age security cheques. They are prepared to do all the essential things. What is more, they asked Canada Post to reinstate their former collective agreement during the negotiations and said they would be prepared to go back to the bargaining table and get to work. It was Canada Post that locked them out.

• (1100)

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst would want me to clarify the record on this particular point. He made comments during his speech with regard to the 1997 back-to-work legislation by the previous Liberal government. In fact, the strike vote had been taken on November 19, and the legislation was passed on December 5. There had been a significant period of time.

I have a summation of the critical path of that legislation. I will look for unanimous consent to table this summation.

Statements by Members

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table that summation?

[English]

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There will be three minutes left for questions and comments after question period.

We will move on now to statements by members. The hon. member for Delta—Richmond East.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

DELTA—RICHMOND EAST

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I represent a beautiful riding stretching from sunny Tsawwassen to vibrant Hamilton, to picturesque Ladner and the historic fishing port of Steveston straddling the mighty Fraser River. I wish to specifically acknowledge the faith and hard work of my campaign team, my husband Brent Chapman, our four children, Hannah, Beau, Donna, Lindsay, and son-in-law John, a great grandson of a former Conservative prime minister of Canada.

My heartfelt thanks go out to the 54.2% of Delta—Richmond East voters who, on May 2, put their confidence in me and the Conservative Party's platform, especially our vision for justice and the economy.

[Translation]

I am proud to be part of a government that is a convincing and passionate voice for Canadian families.

[English]

Thanks, merci beaucoup or, as I say to my Mandarin-speaking constituents, Xièxie.

[Translation]

SHEFFORD

Mr. Réjean Genest (Shefford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today for the first time in the House of Commons.

I would like to thank all the voters in the riding of Shefford who placed their trust in me on May 2. I am committed to working for them over the next four years and to representing their concerns in Ottawa. We have a lot of work to do to help families who are struggling to make ends meet, to improve our health care system and to help job-creating small businesses.

Over the course of my term, I will stand up for workers, to protect their salaries and their pensions.

I would once again like to thank the people of Shefford. I promise that I will be listening to what they have to say.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, coming from B.C., I know there are still some Canucks fans crying in their beer, but today I am talking about wine. The aspect of Motion No. 218 that I have brought forward supports efforts to bring Canada's wine laws into the 21st century.

Hailing from the beautiful Okanagan Valley, Canadians from all over the country are drawn to our vineyards for the ultimate wine and culinary tourism experience. Yet when they try to purchase bottles of wine to take home, they, like anyone living outside a wine-producing province, are prohibited from doing so. Likewise, despite a robust online market in most other consumer sectors, vintners are prohibited from selling directly to Canadian consumers.

The current law hurts the Canadian wine brand and prohibits the growth of fledgling wine producers. With the help of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of National Revenue, as well as strong grassroots support, we are working toward creating a personal exemption which respects the jurisdiction of provincial liquor boards.

Let us relax this archaic 1928 interprovincial trade barrier and create a win-win for Canadian wine producers and Canadian consumers. Let us free my grapes. Check out freemygrapes.ca.

HOCKEY

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was going to stand in the House today, a disappointed Vancouverite, eat crow, congratulate the Bruins and gloat a bit about our 16 Canadian home boys who helped them win. I was going to say how proud I am that the Canucks played like champions and took it down to the wire, game seven. I was going to be cocky and tell Boston to enjoy the cup while it can. Next year the Canucks are bringing it home, white towel mojo and all.

That all seems so banal now. The looting and burning riots in Vancouver fill me with shame and sadness. Thanks to the first responders who kept us safe, the well-prepared VPD, RCMP, St. Paul's and VGH emergency. Vancouver's true sports fans were gracious in defeat, but for the small band of hooligans who defaced my beautiful city, justice must be swift and sure.

● (1105)

NATIONAL PARKS

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the 100th anniversary of Canada's national parks.

In my great riding of Leeds—Grenville this summer, people can visit the following sites of significance in Canada's history: the Battle of the Windmill National Historic Site near Prescott, where in 1838 British troops and local militia defeated an invasion force of 300 American and Canadian rebels and prevented them from capturing Fort Wellington; Fort Wellington, which was built during the War of 1812 to defend the St. Lawrence River shipping route; the St. Lawrence Islands National Park, a tiny jewel with a rich and complex natural and human history; the 1810 Old Stone Mill in Delta, which showcases milling technology and 1800s industrial heritage; and the best part of the Rideau Canal, which, including Fort Henry and the Kingston Fortifications, is a world heritage site. The Rideau Canal is the finest and only continuously operating example of a European slack water canal in North America.

I encourage Canadians to visit these sites this year.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday one of my fellow citizens wrote me to say it took her three hours to get from Lachine to downtown Montreal, three hours to go 12 kilometres. That is four kilometres per hour and at that speed it is quicker to walk.

The closing of the Mercier Bridge has seriously disrupted the daily lives of my constituents and those of West Island and South Shore. In my riding, there are not enough trains to meet the increased demands and the stations are too far apart.

We must find concrete and long-lasting solutions to build a better future. The time to act is now. I am convinced that working together we can find a solution and that we can improve the lives of the people of NDG, Lachine and Dorval. I am committing myself to this work today and I will not stop until we get the job done.

* * *

PONOKA STAMPEDE

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this year the Ponoka Stampede will celebrate its 75th anniversary.

For the past 75 years, the Ponoka Stampede has treated people from all over North America to a top-notch rodeo, exciting races and affordable family entertainment. Attracting approximately 60,000 spectators each year, the Ponoka Stampede has become a tradition not only for the spectators but also for the hundreds of volunteers who work hard year after year to make the Ponoka Stampede one of Alberta's prime annual tourist attractions.

There is something for all ages, a full slate of rodeo events, chuckwagon races, a huge parade, an art show, midway rides and games, and the always exciting fireworks at the end of the day. The high calibre of stock, the world-class contestants, plus the unsurpassed facilities ensure a great show rain or shine.

I encourage one and all to come to Ponoka from June 27 to July 3 and experience real western hospitality and celebrate 75 years of the Ponoka Stampede.

Statements by Members

FAMILIES

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a member of a government that respects the values, the principles and the beliefs for the needs of hard-working Canadian families.

Our government's low tax plan will permanently enhance the guaranteed income supplement for some 680,000 of Canada's most vulnerable seniors.

Our government also supports family caregivers by removing the cap on eligible expenses that caregivers can claim under the medical expenses tax credit.

We also support parents by providing their children with the opportunities to grow creatively by establishing the children's art tax credit.

We support Canadian parents, their children and grandparents. That is why we put forward the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. It is a low tax plan for jobs and growth and it is working. We have and will continue to be here for hard-working Canadian families.

* * *

DARSHAN GILL

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week Surrey and the South Asian communities across B.C. mourned the loss of a great, progressive man. On June 10, Dr. Darshan Gill died of cancer at Surrey Memorial Hospital. He was 68.

Dr. Gill was a leader in our community. He was a strong secular voice for the South Asian population and his bridging efforts as a translator and a peacemaker were remarkable. He was the former editor of *Canada Darpan* which he founded in 1982. He also hosted *Sahitnama*, a literary program on Radio India every Sunday. He edited 20 books and the Punjab government granted him a literary award for his contribution to Punjabi literature abroad.

Dr. Gill worked tirelessly to promote the Canadian values he held so dear, justice, equality and fairness for all. Our thoughts are with his family and their three children. The residents in our community share in their loss.

* * *

● (1110)

HOCKEY

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a wonderful outpouring of city and national pride, some 100,000 fans made the effort to support our home team the Vancouver Canucks in an exciting Stanley Cup series.

Statements by Members

Despite a valiant effort, we were all heartbroken by the Canucks' loss in game seven to the Boston Bruins, yet there was no need for the fringe rioting in the streets to kick Vancouver when the city was already down.

Last night, thugs attacked our city destroying blocks of businesses, turning over cars and looting.

Vancouver is a very proud city. We continue to be ranked as a world-class city to work, live and play. However, last night our "city of glass" was shattered again by Stanley Cup rioting.

My thoughts, and all our thoughts on the government side, are with the people of Vancouver as our city cleans up after these unacceptable acts of hostility.

* * *

[Translation]

HULL—AYLMER

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my constituents, the people of Hull—Aylmer, for placing their trust in me and electing me on May 2 to represent them here in the House.

Our work has already begun and issues such as protecting Gatineau Park, protecting public service jobs and a possible ferry between Aylmer and Kanata remain our priorities.

We are committed to moving forward on these issues and working with representatives of all levels of government to achieve them.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the 35th anniversary of Outaouais en fête, a festival to be held from June 23 to 26.

I would like to thank Mr. Perreault of Impératif français, as well as the event's organizing committee and all of the volunteers, who will contribute to the success of this national celebration, even though Canadian Heritage refuses to support the event.

* * *

[English]

PENSIONS

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the official opposition is gathering in all its elements this weekend at the NDP national convention in Vancouver. Here the NDP will discuss radical hard left policies that have no room in mainstream Canadian politics.

I would like to highlight one plan from the Canadian Labour Congress that proposes a Canada pension plan premium increase that will raise taxes on hard-working Canadians and job creators. This is a risky scheme that will raise taxes on Canadians across this great nation. The NDP is so open to such a policy that it has actually proposed it twice in resolutions 3-02-11 and 3-03-11.

NDP members, who are out of touch, have to realize that they are now the official opposition and that there is no room in the mainstream of Canadian politics for radical policies such as this one.

[Translation]

DANIEL LESSARD

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud and honoured to pay tribute today to a man who has decided to call it quits after 42 years as a journalist.

Daniel Lessard is one of those great journalists who made a difference in the wonderful world of politics. Having witnessed firsthand the major debates of the past few decades, he put things into perspective and was always a reliable source of information. Someone once said that integrity breeds credibility. Daniel Lessard helped build the reputation and credibility of the Radio-Canada newsroom and various current affairs programs, such as *Les Coulisses du pouvoir*.

I was interviewed often by Daniel. His interviews were a reflection of the man himself: respectful, honest, straightforward, without airs, but always determined to get to the bottom of things.

The Liberal Party of Canada and I wish him a happy retirement. Thank you, Daniel, for a magnificent career. Enjoy these tranquil moments with Debra and your sons, Christian and Charles-Adrian. We hope to see you again and we can hardly wait for your historical novel.

Good luck and thank you.

* * *

●(1115)

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while our Conservative government remains focused on Canadians' priorities, the economy and employment, the NDP will be meeting in Vancouver to develop policies that it will defend as the official opposition. One of these policies results from fabrications of the radical left: a work year of only 45 days.

That is the NDP's idea of employment insurance reform.

Last year, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business described this idea as fiscally irresponsible.

If ever it were put into practice, this idea would cost Canadians at least \$7 billion and would permanently increase contributions by 35%. Like the NDP's other tax increases, it would kill employment and stall our fragile economic recovery.

While our Conservative government is bringing Canadians back to work, the NDP is looking for ways to pay Canadians for only 45 days of work. The NDP has lost touch with reality and with Canadian families.

* * *

DANIEL LESSARD

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after a 43-year career, accomplished journalist Daniel Lessard is turning off his microphone.

This native of Beauce started his career in Montmagny, on the CKBM airwaves. He then worked in this region for CJRC before heading to Montreal, where he worked for CKAC.

He started working for Radio-Canada some 30 years ago, and remained there for the rest of his long and very successful career.

He hosted the famous *Ce soir* in the late 1970s, and then moved to Parliament Hill to become a radio, then television, correspondent, covering the most important events of our time.

As a television host and a key witness to his era, with an unparalleled ability to break down complex issues, Daniel Lessard left his mark on Parliament Hill and in people's homes. After spending the last six years hosting *Les Coulisses du pouvoir*, his retirement is much deserved.

We wish Daniel Lessard a happy retirement and many happy times together with his family.

* * *

[English]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to the priorities of Canadian families, jobs and the economy.

That is why last week, in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low tax plan for jobs and growth, our government took a stand for the GTA. We have made significant investments in greater Toronto to support economic and social development.

Through the renewal of local infrastructure, support for culture, sport and the environment, we have stood up for Toronto. Toronto responded by electing its strongest team in a generation, a Conservative team.

We have supported the Harbourfront Centre, the Royal Conservatory of Music, and next year, the 100th Grey Cup. We are improving nearshore water and eco-system health in the Great Lakes.

Our government is standing up for the GTA's priorities: jobs and the economy.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

LABOUR RELATIONS

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada accepts and protects the rights of workers to collectively bargain. This is a normal process that should not be interfered with. With its special bills, the government is clearly siding with management and is taking away the right of workers to use legal pressure tactics.

Why is the government so quick to interfere in a legitimate negotiating process?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as of yet, management and the union have been unable to

reach an agreement. They are threatening to do significant damage to the Canadian economy, which this government finds unacceptable. We will act in the best interests of the Canadian economy and the people of Canada.

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have to let the parties come to an agreement. The government should not be getting involved so early on in the process and picking winners. The workers are currently fighting to protect their pensions. They do not have a choice, because the government did not do what was necessary to strengthen and protect the retirement pensions of workers here in Canada.

Why does the government want to impose a pension model that leaves people to fend for themselves?

● (1120)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the Leader of the NDP's statements in this regard. The reality is that these two parties are threatening to do significant damage to those who are not at the table. It is the government's responsibility to protect the best interests, the broader interests, of the people of Canada, and we will take action to do so.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government should be protecting the right of seniors to security and an economic future they can count on. However, now we see, with the government's interference in the current labour dispute, the real motive. The government is backing executive bonuses in the millions instead of standing behind pensioners and retirees who are trying to protect their future.

The government's approach on pensions is going to leave the next generation with a burden that it will not be able to handle, a social debt for the future. It should be our job to ensure that retirees can age with dignity.

What the government is doing is wrong. Why is it leaving people to fend for themselves—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the leader of the NDP said has nothing to do with the government's legislation. The reality is that we have two parties, management and the union, that have been unable to come to an agreement after some months of negotiation.

As a consequence of their inability to come to an agreement, they are threatening serious damage on a wide swath of the Canadian public. This is not acceptable to the Canadian government or to the economy, and we will act to ensure that those who are not at the table have their interests protected.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, back-to-work legislation is an unjustified interference with the rights of workers to free collective bargaining. The government's failure to address the pension crisis is what is really at stake here. The fact is that Conservatives are choosing a side. They are strengthening the position of large employers who want to dismantle defined benefit pension plans.

Why is the labour minister siding with the dismantlement of pensions?

Oral Questions

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by indicating that the hon. member's characterization of labour law in Canada is completely incorrect.

It is also important to note that there are no sides being taken in any kind of legislation that may be put before the House. We are on the side of the economy and of general Canadian interests because we want these parties to make a deal. If they cannot make a deal, we will help them in the process to do so with the least amount of damage to the Canadian public.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, labour rights do exist in this country and the government's approach to the current labour disputes wrecks of hypocrisy. The government wants back-to-work legislation, denying workers the right to strike, and undermining their capacity to bargain fairly.

In the case of Canada Post, it is a government agency that locked them out. How is that fair negotiation? Why is the government getting in the middle of a labour dispute, and picking winners and losers?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in this country, we do have the right to collectively bargain, and it is the role of Labour Canada to help facilitate this collective bargaining process.

In the case of both Air Canada and Canada Post, we have been diligently at the table providing conciliation and mediation. I have helped to provide services to both parties. We want them to reach their own deal but they have not been able to do.

We need to protect those who do not have a place at that table. That is our appropriate response as the government.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the trouble is that when the only tool we have in our toolbox is a sledgehammer, everything starts to look like a rock. That is the problem we have with the government.

The Prime Minister said, in answer to an earlier question, that pensions had nothing to do with the back to work legislation. Nothing could be further from the truth, to coin a phrase.

The fact is that it is the pension issue that is at the heart of the negotiations in this dispute, in the Canada Post dispute, in the issue with CUPE coming up with Air Canada and with the machinists coming up at Air Canada. It is the core of the issue.

Will the Prime Minister not face up to—

• (1125)

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Labour has just said, the government has availed itself of a number of tools to help facilitate a settlement in this matter. To this point that has not been successful.

I hope it will be successful, but the government is making it clear that it will not tolerate the two parties doing significant damage to the Canadian economy and to those who are not at the table and that we will act to protect the broader interests of Canadians.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone agrees that, without a doubt, the public interest is important. However, in the public interest, people must also have access to pensions to live on in the future. This is the issue that is at the heart of negotiations, not only those that are currently under way but also future negotiations. This is the gap that the government is creating: it is leaving people to fend for themselves without its support.

How can it tolerate this situation?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is not taking a position on issues. Discussions are taking place between the parties but the government absolutely cannot tolerate these parties doing significant damage to the economy. Our responsibility is to act to protect the best interests of the economy and of Canadians and we will do so.

[English]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope the Prime Minister is not suggesting for a moment that there is no public interest in economic security, that there is no public interest in economic justice and that there is no public interest in the fact that workers are being left to fend for themselves in a situation where even the largest of employers are saying, "We are not going to provide for a defined benefit plan any more for your pensions".

Does the Prime Minister not understand that what is at stake here is the pensions, not only of these workers, not only of these employees, of these people, it is the pension system in the entire country.

When will the Prime Minister face up to that fact? That is the problem.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my answer is the same to both NDP leaders.

Our position has nothing to do with the interests of management or the interests of workers. It has to do with the wider interests of the Canadian economy and the Canadian population.

This strike will do significant damage to the Canadian economy at a delicate time of recovery. The government cannot tolerate that. The Canadian economy cannot tolerate that. We will act to ensure those wider interests are protected.

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AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a minister of the Crown has an obligation to treat taxpayers with respect and be accountable to Parliament.

The President of the Treasury Board has failed miserably on both counts, because since the Auditor General's report he has been hiding under the desk of the foreign affairs minister.

Since he cannot seem to stand up in this House and apologize for his out-of-control booty run through the backwoods of Muskoka, I will keep it simple: go to the twittersphere, 140 characters or less, hashtag, I am sorry, Canada.

Oral Questions

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do enjoy these daily rhetorical flourishes from my friend opposite.

The bottom line is that 32 public infrastructure projects were provided with government support. Every dollar is accounted for. Airports were fixed up. A community centre was built. A provincial highway was resurfaced.

The Auditor General came forward with some suggestions and observations on how the government can do a better job of being more open and transparent, and we fully accepted her good advice.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are 150-plus Conservatives sitting behind the President of the Treasury Board and I am sure all of them would love to siphon taxpayers' dollars off for their own personal pork barrel projects. However, that is why we have rules and that is why we have Treasury Board.

What message is the government sending by putting him in charge of Treasury Board: that it is open season on the taxpayers' trust? Otherwise, why would the Prime Minister put the Muskoka fox in charge of the taxpayers' henhouse?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me remind the member opposite that there are not 150 members of Parliament standing behind the President of the Treasury Board. There are actually 165, and together they form a strong, stable, national majority Conservative government.

* * *

● (1130)

[Translation]

BORDER CROSSINGS

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday my colleague nearly got an answer from the President of the Treasury Board regarding the use of money from the border infrastructure fund in his riding.

Canadians are still being forced to wait at border crossings, while the money that was supposed to be spent on relieving congestion at the border was instead used to please the friends of the member for Party Sound—Muskoka.

How are those projects going to help reduce border delays for Canadians?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as has been reported in this House numerous times, and I am pleased to do it again, we used an existing spending authority to help expeditiously move to get these 32 public infrastructure projects undertaken.

The Auditor General has suggested that we need to be more open and that we need to be more transparent in terms of the estimates that are presented to Parliament. We have fully accepted the Auditor General's good advice.

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, any squandering of public money is unacceptable. The foolish spending on the G8 quite simply should not have happened. To quote someone who is well known in Canadian politics, "I can only hope that it is the last volume in a...spree of waste and wild spending..." Who said that? It was the former President of the Treasury Board and current Minister of Foreign Affairs.

When will the Conservatives start showing some accountability to Canadians?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my friend from Hull—Aylmer for going back and reading various quotes I made as president of Treasury Board. I do hope other members of her caucus will reflect on some of those great speeches and comments.

This is what the government did. We spent money fixing up an airport in North Bay. We spent money fixing up a provincial highway in southern Ontario. We built a community centre. Those are all good public infrastructure projects that will benefit people in these municipalities for many years to come.

The Auditor General has come forward with some good advice and some good observations, and the government accepts all that good advice and will do better in the future.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are demanding to know why the government is continuing to push the reckless northern gateway pipeline project. It is not only a significant danger to the environment and the economy, but B.C.'s mayors, first nations and businesses are all lined up against it.

Now we learn that the government's own officials at Natural Resources Canada have told the Conservative government that there is already enough capacity in the pipeline system for exports.

Will the natural resources minister from Toronto finally stand in his place and tell the people of British Columbia why he is willing to put our way of life and our environment at risk for his friends in the oil sector?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment has referred the northern gateway pipeline project to a joint review panel, which is the highest level of scrutiny possible.

This review is an open process where any interested party, including aboriginal groups, can express their views. We are committed to ensuring that any project is environmentally sustainable.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government cannot continue to hide behind the joint review panel while spending millions to push the project.

Oral Questions

From the beginning, the people of British Columbia have said that the risks far outweigh the benefits, not only from the pipeline but from the hundreds of oil tankers that would be operating off our coast.

Why will the government not just say no to Enbridge and ban oil tankers off our B.C. coast?

[Translation]

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the National Energy Board is a strong independent regulator that ensures pipeline safety. It is mandated to ensure the safety and the security of pipelines from when they are first proposed until they are abandoned.

Unlike the opposition member, I do not believe that decisions should be influenced by cheap politics.

* * *

• (1135)

[English]

TAX HARMONIZATION

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister is too modest, at least about his role in the HST. He proposed raising taxes for people in B.C. on just about everything they buy and would not take no for an answer. However, in the House the minister refuses to take responsibility and passes the blame on to the province.

Why will the minister not finally take some responsibility for the fiasco that is called HST in B.C.?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our finance minister is always willing to take responsibility for the economy, which is the strongest in the G7. However, he should not have to take responsibility for something that is provincial jurisdiction.

The hon. member should understand that those are provincial decisions and that they are made on behalf of the provincial government.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is not much of an endorsement for the tax that the minister worked so hard to impose on the people of British Columbia.

As we speak, there is a referendum to undo the work the minister has done. British Columbians are wondering why he is so shy about his role.

Does the finance minister not have anything to say to the people of B.C. as they cast ballots to pass judgment on his tax?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, that is the choice of the provincial government. My understanding is that there is a referendum and no one should be interfering in that referendum. The people of British Columbia will choose. They elected a government that chose that. That is their decision and their decision alone.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, British Columbians feel betrayed by federal Conservatives

and B.C. Liberals imposing the HST on B.C. We have seen how it has hurt small businesses across B.C. and ordinary B.C. families.

The HST agreement allows B.C. to withdraw after some time without any financial penalty.

Will the Conservatives force B.C. to pay back the \$1.6 billion bribe? Will they further penalize British Columbians for rejecting the HST? Or, will they accept the will of B.C. voters?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I encourage all those who are allowed to participate in the referendum to participate in it. That is democracy.

That choice was the provincial government's choice in British Columbia, just like it was in Ontario and in other provinces.

I encourage everyone to participate in that.

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SEARCH AND RESCUE

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only are experts in search and rescue saying that closing the Maritime rescue centre is the wrong thing to do in St. John's and Quebec City, but so are sea captains.

Captain Charles Domineux, the captain of the ferry that sails between Saint-Pierre and Miquelon and Newfoundland and Labrador, is furious at the government's actions. He states, "I would have thought that in the wake of the tragic crash of the Cougar helicopter at sea in Newfoundland that claimed 17 lives, the last thing the government would do is diminish safety and put even more lives at risk".

In the face of this expert opinion, why is the government still prepared to put the lives of people in danger?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we formed government in 2006, Coast Guard officials told us that the Coast Guard was in significant need of investment. We promptly invested \$1.4 billion in fleet renewal and new ships. We listened.

When Coast Guard officials proposed moving the *Terry Fox* and the *Louis S. St-Laurent* to Newfoundland and Labrador for operational reasons, again we listened.

We listened then and we listen now as we move to consolidate services that maintain safety and response times, unlike the Liberal government that left ships tied up at dock with no fuel.

* * *

[Translation]

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has invested billions of dollars in the National Research Council to develop the technologies we need to be competitive in the 21st century.

The government has announced that it wants to trim the fat. Now it wants to cut 20% from the budget of the NRC, which employs people who could turn these technologies into jobs for Canadians.

Does the government believe that investing in technologies for the future is pointless?

• (1140)

[English]

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's number one priority is the economy. That is why we have increased overall the NRC's budget by 17% to support research, to help businesses and to help the economy.

On top of that funding, we provided temporary two year stimulus funding to the NRC under the economic action plan. As everybody should know, that ended on March 31.

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[Translation]

G8 SUMMIT

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister said that the G8 report contains, and I quote, "...some interesting recommendations and observations."

The Auditor General called what he found "very unusual and troubling".

Does the Prime Minister really believe that the misuse of \$50 million is just "interesting"?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, it was not \$50 million. It was about 10% or 20% less than that.

The Auditor General made some observations and recommendations to this government and to Parliament on how we could have greater transparency and openness. We have fully accepted those recommendations.

While I am on my feet, let me thank Sheila Fraser for the outstanding job she has done for Canadians over the past 10 years.

* * *

[Translation]

ASBESTOS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every day, work is underway in the House of Commons to decontaminate members' offices that contain asbestos. The offices are being decontaminated because asbestos is carcinogenic and harmful to human health.

Could the member for Mégantic—L'Érable, who is so proud of chrysotile, tell this House whether he wants the asbestos in his colleagues's offices to be replaced with chrysotile, which is allegedly less carcinogenic, or would he rather continue to export his hypocrisy to third-world countries?

Oral Questions

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to clear some things up. For 30 years, Canada has been promoting the safe and controlled use of chrysotile nationally and internationally, and all recent scientific journals report that chrysotile can be used safely in a controlled environment. That is not at all what the member on the other side of the House is talking about.

[English]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservative support for the asbestos industry is indefensible. Quebecers and communities alike want their miners to be safe and do not want to be global exporters of asbestos into the developing world.

Unions, doctors and even Health Canada agree asbestos causes cancer. When will the minister stand up for what is right and agree to put chrysotile asbestos on the UN's list of hazardous materials?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has been promoting the safe use of chrysotile nationally and internationally for 30 years. Scientific journals report that chrysotile can be used safely in a controlled environment.

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SHALE GAS

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, companies are becoming increasingly interested in unconventional energy sources such as shale gas. However, the public knows very little about how shale gas is extracted. For example, hydraulic fracturing is very controversial and has not been thoroughly studied.

Can the Minister of the Environment tell us if he has any studies on this and what its environmental impact is?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hydraulic fracturing is a rather old technique in terms of conventional oil production, but it is relatively new with regard to shale gas. Provincial and federal governments share in the responsibility of regulating the oil and gas sector. The regulation of shale gas is mainly a provincial and territorial responsibility, except on federal lands. Research is being conducted.

[Translation]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, fracturing uses massive amounts of water mixed with very toxic chemicals. Yet the government does not require that companies disclose the nature of the products used. The mixture that is injected into the ground can contaminate the groundwater and waterways.

Will the federal government finally require companies to report what they are putting into our soil, as the Americans have done?

Oral Questions

● (1145)

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the principle responsibility rests with the provinces and the territories. The federal government has an interest and can involve itself when a threat is perceived and reported.

As my colleague knows, Environment Canada is responsible for regulating toxic substances under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and where required, we will intervene.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that international trade is a kitchen table issue. It creates jobs and accounts for almost 60% of our annual GDP.

This weekend in Vancouver the NDP members will be discussing many different issues, including trade. We urge them to reject proposals that advocate for a complete withdrawal from our current free trade agreements.

Could the Minister of International Trade explain to the House why we are pursuing such an ambitious free trade agenda and why these socialist proposals are absolutely wrong?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 2, Canadians gave this Conservative government a very clear mandate to build our economy and expand our trade relationships. The member is right: trade is a kitchen table issue. In fact, Canadians intuitively know that trade is critical to our future prosperity and our long-term economic security.

We as the Conservative government are getting things done. Why are the NDP members not?

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*[Translation]***CHILD CARE**

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian families are struggling to pay for child care. The Conservatives are insulting Canadians by ignoring this problem. Their policy does not make sense and is unfair.

When will the minister have the courage to admit that her policy has failed Canadian families? When will she get to work on making child care affordable for all Canadians?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we did when we came to office five years ago. We established the universal child care benefit.

[English]

This was to help Canadians access the form of child care that they thought was best for their children. We believe in choice for Canadians.

We also provided funding to the provinces to help them create child care spaces in case the parent's choice was for formal daycare.

Since then, in using those funds, the provinces have created over 100,000 spaces to help parents raise their children in their choice.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives just do not get it. There is no choice in child care when one gets \$100 a month. It is not enough to help families pay for daycare.

The New Democrat plan would create 100,000 new daycare spaces, while still providing families with financial help. The government's plan gives families \$3 a day for daycare.

Why is the government ignoring parents who cannot afford daycare services for their children?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that each family in our country is in different circumstances. In some families the parents work evenings, or they work weekends. Some want to stay home and raise their children themselves. Some do want to use formal daycare. Our universal child care benefit gives parents the choice in that. It recognizes and supports the differences. It supports their right to choose how to raise their children.

* * *

*[Translation]***GASOLINE PRICES**

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for a number of years now, we have seen a steady increase in the price of gas at the pumps. Far too often, sudden spikes occur just before long weekends and holidays. People know that, contrary to what the major oil companies would have us believe, these price changes are not based on economics, but on pure speculation. Canadians are being squeezed by these big companies.

Can the government ask the Competition Bureau to conduct an investigation into this sector?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the price of gasoline is a major issue that concerns all Canadians, starting with me. That is why we have asked the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology to address the issue of fluctuating prices, so that the industry can better explain to Canadians how and why prices change the way they do.

● (1150)

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the industry committee has already studied this. We need action and that is what Canadians deserve right now, not another expensive study.

Oral Questions

What we see right now are record profits, record gouging, record windfalls for stock speculators, record profits for oil and gas CEOs and we also see record complacency from the government. Canadians have no choice. They have to drive to work and take care of their families.

The minister does have a choice. Therefore, why is he hiding behind the oil companies instead of going after the gouging? Is he addicted to the tax revenue that is coming in? Why will he not establish an industry ombudsman or at least follow through with the recommendations the committee made last time?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the opposition cannot have it both ways. The NDP says that it cares about keeping gas prices low, but it opposed our GST cut and wanted to impose a carbon tax on Canadians that would see gas prices skyrocket. This is not responsible. We have a strong mandate from Canadians for economic growth, and this is what we will do.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the minister of state reflected the government's continued and disgraceful performance of abandoning Canadians in desperate difficulty abroad. Henk Tepper has been in a Lebanese prison for three months, facing extradition to Algeria. Yet the government does nothing, other than, as the minister did yesterday, blame that Canadian farmer.

I ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs to intervene on behalf of the Tepper family. When will he contact his Lebanese counterpart directly and demand Henk Tepper's release?

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated to the House, consular services provides all appropriate assistance to Canadians who find themselves in difficulties abroad. This has been done with Mr. Tepper, his family and his lawyer. There have been regular contacts to assist, advise and provide all appropriate assistance.

We cannot demand that another country release one of our citizens, but we will continue to ensure a timely and transparent resolution of this situation.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is irresponsible for the minister to blame the bureaucrats. Where are the ministers, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs?

Mr. Tepper was travelling with Potatoes Canada doing commercial business when he was arrested. This arrest and the minister's inaction and inability to do something has struck fear in other potato exporters doing their jobs abroad.

Why will the government not stand up for this Canadian doing business abroad and why does the Minister of Foreign Affairs refuse to take direct and immediate action, and that is the Minister of Foreign Affairs, not the bureaucrats?

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the government has been actively providing consular assistance to Mr.

Tepper and support to his family since his arrest. Consular officials regularly visit Mr. Tepper to ensure his health and well-being and are regularly in contact with his lawyer to provide assistance, support, updates on his case. We will continue to engage with senior Lebanese officials to request due process in a timely and transparent handling of his file.

[Translation]

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the development of our strategy with countries in the Americas is not limited to supporting companies that do business there. We need agencies that liaise between governments, civil society and experts in order to help us develop a more comprehensive strategy for this continent.

Can the government commit to providing core funding to Canadian agencies such as FOCAL in order to develop a long-term strategy for the Americas?

[English]

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have advised the House, FOCAL has been given interim financing for a number of years. The funding agreements indicated that it was with the expectation that FOCAL would become self-supporting and have private support for its research.

We are disappointed that the decision that FOCAL had to make did come forward. However, we have the advantage and help of a great deal of research across the country from other bodies and other institutions.

● (1155)

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government proclaims loud and clear that it wants to focus on our relations with Latin America, but in the meantime, it is not providing adequate funding to an agency like FOCAL to ensure its viability, even though that agency helps us better understand the issues in the Americas. Effective the end of September, FOCAL will be no more.

How can Canada have an effective strategy for the Americas if it does not support such an important source of expertise?

[English]

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, even after the shift away from core funding, the government continued to provide significant funding to FOCAL for a number of years. Some of it was aimed at assisting the organization to become financially sustainable. That was not possible.

Oral Questions

The Government of Canada does believe that arm's-length Canadian research on the Americas is useful in shaping policy. We continue to explore how such research and analysis might be carried out in the future.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians do not think human smugglers should be permitted to exploit vulnerable refugees. Every year thousands of people wait in line for a chance to come to Canada legally, but these criminals extort thousands of dollars in order to help people jump the queue.

Could the minister of immigration please tell the House what our Conservative government is doing to put a stop to all of this?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year Canada welcomed the largest number of immigrants in six decades. We welcomed more refugees, resettled through the UN, than any other country in the world per capita. We have the fairest asylum system.

What we will not accept are criminal gangs seeking to abuse this country's generosity and treating Canada like a doormat by facilitating the illegal and dangerous entry of people paying tens of thousands of dollars to smuggling syndicates. That is why later today the government will table our legislation to crack down on human smuggling, to stop those who would seek to abuse this country's immigration laws and undermine public confidence, and to support legitimate immigration and refugees.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday the Minister of the Environment told this House that the oil sands industry contributed 6.5% of Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions in the government's report to the United Nations.

The minister's own office has confirmed that his comments were not true.

Will the minister, knowing what he does now, rise, admit his answer was wrong, correct the record, and fully apologize?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is still in the environmental weeds on this question.

As in previous years, our reporting is detailed and in full compliance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and it includes all emissions from the oil gas.

There are three energy categories that contain the oil sands gas: fossil fuel production and refining, mining and oil and gas extraction, and fugitive sources.

In response to queries, Environment Canada reduced a 6.5% estimate of those tonnages, which are in the United Nations report.

[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Health Council of Canada is asking all levels of government to work together to strengthen our health care system. During the last session, the government asked the Senate to review the 2004 health accord. The Senate is an undemocratic institution that is not accountable to anyone.

Will the government assign the responsibility of reviewing this important accord to the Standing Committee on Health, which is made up of elected members of Parliament?

● (1200)

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is up to the health committee to determine what projects it wants to review. I have been very open with the health committee. If it wants to review the 2014 accord, it is more than welcome to do so.

There is a statutory requirement, under the health accord, for a committee to review the 2014 accord. I asked the Senate to review that prior to the election. I am open to HESA conducting its own review as well.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week marks two years since Iranians went to the polls to express their democratic will. The regime in Tehran responded with repression.

Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs please comment on this anniversary?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we stand with our allies in condemning this regime and the crackdown that followed the election just two short years ago. It was absolutely brutal and totally uncalled for.

Two years on, the repression continues, sadly, in Iran. Next door in Syria, Iranian officials are assisting the al-Assad regime's crackdown on the vulnerable people of Syria.

We will work with the international community to increase pressure on these regimes. We stand with the people of Syria. We stand with the people of Iran who yearn to be free and to exercise their rights.

[Translation]

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Gilbert Rozon's recent report on the performance of Quebec's tourism industry points out the multitude of aging attractions and the shortage of new projects. The report also highlights the lack of a common vision amongst the industry's players.

Will this government commit to working closely with the Quebec government and industry stakeholders to develop a vision for the future of Quebec's tourism industry?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question and congratulate him on being elected.

I have just come from Vancouver, where I met with representatives of the Canadian Tourism Commission. I can tell the hon. member that we are developing a tourism strategy for Canada. It is a very important industry. Last week, I met with my colleague, the tourism minister for Quebec. We are working for the tourism industry and we will soon have an effective strategy that responds to the public's requests.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment and concerns oil and gas exploration.

[English]

I certainly agree with hon. members of the official opposition about risks of oil and gas in British Columbia, but on the other coast while many areas have been developed, one has never been touched.

This is the Gulf of St. Lawrence, a most biologically productive region with over 2,000 marine species including endangered blue whales. It is now threatened by a deep water oil well. This is a region that touches five provinces.

The minister has received the request for a joint panel. Could he tell this House if he agrees?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her first question on the environment in this House. I hope that our ongoing dialogue will continue to be based on facts and science. The government is committed to ensuring—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I do not think the hon. minister was finished his reply.

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I can confirm for my hon. colleague that I have received a request from the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board to refer the project to a review. I will consider the facts and make a decision in due course.

Oral Questions

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the Ladies Gallery of Mr. Rick Hansen, a celebrated athlete and a recipient of the Companion Order of Canada and the Order of British Columbia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

● (1205)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as you said, it is time for the usual Thursday question. However, today, we find ourselves in circumstances that are anything but ordinary. There are only four days left before the scheduled end of this session. In these four days, we will see what the priorities of this government are because two days must be allotted for supply days. The budget must be adopted to cover the expenditures required for the proper functioning of the government. Two days are reserved for the opposition. Naturally, as we just saw in question period, there are attempts to rush the usual way of handling labour relations.

It will then be a matter of determining the government's priorities. For example, the budget implementation bill provides for an increase in the guaranteed income supplement. We do not believe that it is sufficient, but it is still worth supporting. It is interesting because this is directly related to what is currently happening with pensions. People are retiring without enough money to live on, and the government must help them. At the same time, government policies are such that more people will be retiring with insufficient income.

The question is this: what is the government's priority? Does it want to help seniors in need? Does it want to follow up on the proposal by my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh to deal with the problem of mega-trials, or will they let other Hells Angels go free? What is the government's priority? What is our priority for the next four days?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will give a complete answer by moving a motion. There have been consultations among the parties, and I believe that we will have unanimous consent on this motion.

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mega-trials) be disposed of at all stages as follows:

- (a) not more than 1.7 hours shall be allotted for the consideration at second reading;
- (b) if the bill is not reported back by Wednesday, June 22, 2011 during routine proceedings, it shall be deemed to have been reported from the Committee without amendment;
- (c) upon being reported from Committee the bill shall be deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

The Speaker: Does the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, having dealt with that, I can provide a full answer to the question from my friend, the House leader of the official opposition.

We will call Bill C-2, following routine proceedings today. Pursuant to the order just adopted, we will complete the second reading stage of Bill C-2 before we rise.

As decided last week, the House will not sit tomorrow, as a courtesy to the New Democratic members, so they may attend their convention in Vancouver.

[Translation]

On Monday, we will continue debating back-to-work matters. Tuesday, June 21, and Wednesday, June 22, shall be allotted days. On Thursday, we will complete report stage and third reading of Bill C-3, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011.

[English]

Should developments arise relating to the current labour matters at Air Canada and Canada Post, it may be necessary to adjust the business of the House, and I will advise members accordingly when that arises.

* * *

[Translation]

CONTINUING AIR SERVICE FOR PASSENGERS ACT

NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I give notice that, with respect to the consideration of Government Business No. 2, at the next sitting, a minister of the Crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that debate be not further adjourned.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order arising out of question period where the Minister of State (Finance) erroneously asserted that the federal Conservative government had nothing to do with the HST.

I would like to give the minister an opportunity to correct the information by pointing out Bill C-62, which was introduced December 2009 and brought in the HST by this federal government.

• (1210)

The Speaker: That is not a point of order; it is a point of debate. If the member wants to expand on that, she can try to get it on the question period rotation list to do it then, but not on points of order.

* * *

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table a special report from the Canadian Human Rights Commission entitled, "Now a Matter of Rights: Extending Full Human Rights Protection to First Nations".

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(e), this document is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

* * *

[English]

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: I have the honour, pursuant to section 38 of the Access to Information Act, to lay upon the table the report of the Information Commissioner for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2011.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h) this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

* * *

[Translation]

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: Pursuant to subsection 90(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House the annual report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner in respect of the Conflict of Interest Act for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CANADA

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, Export Development Canada's 2010 annual report.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 32(2) of the standing orders of the House of Commons, I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, nine treaties entitled:

*Routine Proceedings***INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS**

Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of Jersey, under Entrustment from the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, for the Exchange of Information relating to Tax Matters, done at St. Helier on 12 January, 2011;

Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Isle of Man, under Entrustment from the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, for the Exchange of Information on Tax Matters, done at Douglas on 17 January, 2011;

Agreement between the Government of Canada and the States of Guernsey under Entrustment from the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, for the Exchange of Information on Tax Matters, done at St. Peter Port on 19 January, 2011;

Cooperation Agreement between the Government of Canada and the European Space Agency, done at Paris on 15 December, 2010;

Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Republic of Latvia for the Promotion and Protection of Investments, done at Riga on 5 May, 2009;

Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Czech Republic for the Promotion and Protection of Investments, done at Prague on 6 May, 2009;

Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of Romania for the Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investment, done at Bucharest on 8 May, 2009;

Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Slovak Republic for the Promotion and Protection of Investment, done at Bratislava on 20 July, 2010; and

Agreement between Canada and Romania concerning Diplomat Premises, done at Bucharest on 11 March, 2011.

An explanatory memorandum is included with each treaty.

* * *

● (1215)

PREVENTING HUMAN SMUGGLERS FROM ABUSING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CONTINUING AIR SERVICE FOR PASSENGERS ACT

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-5, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of air service operations.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two reports to present today.

Under Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the following report of the Canadian-NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the visit of the Defence and Security Committee held in Washington, D.C., and San Diego, United States, on January 31 to February 4, 2011.

The second is the report from the Canadian-NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the joint meeting of the Defence and Security, Economics and Security, and Political Committees held in Brussels, Belgium on February 20 to 22, 2011 and the annual Economics and Security Committee consultation with the OECD held in Paris, France, from February 23 to 24, 2011.

* * *

NATIONAL APPRECIATION DAY ACT

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-228, An Act respecting a National Appreciation Day.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I am honoured to stand in our House of Parliament to reintroduce my private member's bill, an act respecting a national appreciation day.

This bill would designate the third day of March each and every year as a day for the people of Canada to express appreciation for the heroic work of members of the Canadian Forces and emergency response professionals, including police officers, firefighters and paramedics.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CANADIAN SOLDIERS' AND PEACEKEEPERS' MEMORIAL WALL ACT

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-229, An Act to establish a Memorial Wall for Canada's fallen soldiers and peacekeepers.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I am humbled to stand in the House of Commons among my hon. colleagues to reintroduce my private member's bill, an act to establish a memorial wall for Canada's fallen soldiers and peacekeepers.

The bill would require the minister responsible for the National Capital Act to establish a memorial composed of the names of all of Canada's fallen soldiers and peacekeepers, and have it located in a suitable area of public land.

Routine Proceedings

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-230, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (arrest without a warrant).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for allowing me to reintroduce my private member's bill, an act to amend the Criminal Code (arrest without a warrant).

The bill would give a peace officer the power to arrest without a warrant a person who is in breach of a probation order binding that person or a condition of the person's parole.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

● (1220)

CANADA SHIPPING ACT, 2001

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-231, An Act to amend the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 (derelict vessels and wreck).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from New Westminster—Coquitlam for seconding the bill.

In many Canadian coastal communities derelict and abandoned vessels have a negative impact on the natural esthetics of their harbours, and some pose a threat to the local environment. While major environmental dangers from derelict and abandoned vessels are dealt with swiftly by the Canadian Coast Guard, many are left to simply rot away and leach chemicals into the surrounding environment. If an abandoned and derelict vessel is not a major environmental concern and is not posing an obstacle to navigation, there is usually no action taken.

The Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities can become involved in the following situations.

Transport Canada can currently take a lead in instances where a vessel is the cause of an obstruction to navigation. However, vessels in the inter-tidal zone are rarely an obstruction to navigation.

Transport Canada has also been supportive of salvage claims made to the receiver of wrecks when questionable vessels appear ashore or in waters adjacent to communities. However, salvage claims are rarely made against derelict vessels.

Finally, Transport Canada can take the lead in making an assessment as to whether a vessel may pose a threat of pollution. However, an abandoned or derelict vessel that is deemed non-polluting is not dealt with.

Both I, in Nanaimo—Cowichan, and the member from Victoria often hear complaints about derelict vessels that are not dealt with. Hence, I have introduced Bill C-231, An Act to amend the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 (derelict vessels and wreck).

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

CRIMINAL CODE

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-232, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (cruelty to animals).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Jeanne-Le Ber for seconding this bill.

This bill would better protect animals from intentional cruelty. Clearly, animals are sentient beings; they are not property. This bill would take the provision about animal cruelty out of the property section of the Criminal Code.

We have seen far too many examples of animal cruelty that escape the current laws. This bill would increase the likelihood of conviction for animal cruelty.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, for 26 years, the people of Sri Lanka suffered the effects of civil war. In May 2009, Sri Lankan government forces defeated the Tamil Tigers. With the end of the civil war have come accusations of war crimes, together with video evidence. Therefore, I am asking for unanimous consent for the following motion, as seconded by the member from Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

It reads: "That this House calls on the government of Sri Lanka to work with a panel of experts established by the Secretary General of the United Nations as it examines the allegations of crimes committed during the last days of the civil war, and that this House calls on the government of Sri Lanka to ensure that those responsible for any crimes of war be brought to justice and be subject to the full weight of the law".

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

PETITIONS**ASBESTOS**

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by literally thousands of Canadians from all over Canada who call upon Parliament to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer the world has ever known.

The petitioners point out that more Canadians now die from asbestos than from all other industrial and occupational causes combined. They also point out that Canada still remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world and spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry. These signatories call it, "corporate welfare for corporate serial killers". They criticize the government for blocking international efforts designed to curb its use.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to ban asbestos in all of its forms and institute a just transition program for all asbestos workers who may be displaced—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. On a point of order, the hon. member for Cambridge.

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could simply remind the member that during the reading of petitions, there is a short summary of the petition and then it is tabled. It is not really an opportunity to debate it, discuss it or use it to get into one's household.

• (1225)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I thank the member for his intervention. In fact, the summary of petitions should be relatively concise, so I will ask the member to sum up quickly and we will move on to other petitions.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I read this petition every day in exactly the same format. If it does not offend the minister over and over again the hundreds of times he has heard it, I do not know why it offends him now.

These petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to end all government subsidies of asbestos, both in Canada and abroad, and stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention being debated this week, in fact, in Europe.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your recent appointment to Assistant Deputy Chair.

I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FAIR AND EFFICIENT CRIMINAL TRIALS ACT

Hon. Christian Paradis (for the Minister of Justice) moved that Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mega-trials), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be in this House today to join in the second reading debate on Bill C-2, Fair and Efficient Criminal Trials Act. This is an important bill to improve criminal procedure to cut the number of long, drawn-out trials sometimes referred to as megatrials.

The time to bring criminal trials to disposition has steadily increased over the last decade, a fact particularly true in the case of megatrials.

Government Orders

In their November 2008 report reviewing large and complex criminal cases and their procedures in Ontario, former Chief Justice Patrick LeSage and the present Justice Michael Code noted three major events that played a significant role in increasing the duration and complexity of modern criminal trials. These three causal events were the passage of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the reform of evidence law by the Supreme Court of Canada, and the addition of many new, complex statutory provisions to the Criminal Code and other related statutes.

megatrials conducted in Canada are a clear indication of the impact that these causal events have had on the criminal justice system.

Our justice system must have the tools to respond to the demands raised by these long and complex cases to ensure that they do not collapse under their own weight. It had become necessary to find better, innovative ways to respond to the challenges raised by megatrials and to make better use of resources available in the criminal justice system. The amendments to the Criminal Code proposed in Bill C-2 are a significant step in providing these tools.

This legislation also responds to many of the recommendations made by the Air India Commission in relation to terrorism prosecutions.

The reforms proposed in this bill are the product of a great deal of consultation and collaboration with our provincial and territorial partners, as well as various other criminal justice stakeholders. These include the federal-provincial-territorial committee of heads of prosecutions, the Barreau du Québec and the Steering Committee on Justice Efficiencies and Access to Justice.

This work has helped us identify processes and measures that would allow the criminal justice system to function more effectively and expeditiously while respecting the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I would now like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the amendments proposed by this bill.

These amendments generally relate to at least one of three main objectives: strengthening case management; reducing duplication of processes; and otherwise improving criminal procedure.

In regard to strengthening case management, a great deal of work has been done in the area of megatrial reform in the last decade. The body of policy work on this issue, including the Air India Commission report, consistently emphasizes that case management, particularly with respect to the preliminary phase of the trial, is one of the key measures to improve the efficient and effective conduct of large and complex cases. Enhanced case management in this context refers to stronger judicial control of the proceedings.

It is with this goal in mind that this bill would allow for the appointment of a case management judge in any case where it appears that his or her involvement would be beneficial to the overall management of the case and in the best interests of the justice system.

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As it is not always feasible to assign a case to a trial judge early in the process, the appointment of a case management judge would allow for the ground rules to be set for the parties from the very beginning and the effective management of the proceedings.

The case management judge would be explicitly empowered to, among other things, impose deadlines on the parties and assist them in narrowing the issues, making admissions, as well as reaching agreements. He or she may also hear guilty pleas and hand down sentences.

The case management judge, who would be from the court before which the trial is to be held, would also be empowered to rule upon preliminary issues, such as charter motions. Not only would this allow for earlier resolution of these issues upon which the remainder of the trial often rests, but to the extent possible it would also enable the evidence to be presented without interruption to the jury or the trial judge sitting without a jury.

Another benefit of appointing a case management judge is that he or she could continue to play a role even after the preliminary issues have been dealt with and the presentation of the evidence on the merits has begun. Clearly, this role would be auxiliary to that of the trial judge but would include adjudicating issues referred to him or her by the trial judge. This would potentially avoid interruptions during the presentation of the evidence to the trier of fact and allow the trial judge and the case management judge to share the overwhelming responsibilities associated with conducting a mega-trial.

● (1230)

With respect to reducing duplication of processes, improving effectiveness and reducing delays while ensuring trial fairness is consistent with this government's commitment to ensure that justice is delivered swiftly. A number of amendments proposed in Bill C-2 aim at reducing duplication of processes and speak directly to this worthwhile goal.

Absent exceptional circumstances, such as where fresh evidence is discovered, there is no justification for the constant re-litigation of issues that have been fairly adjudicated. Such duplication of processes is not sustainable by the overburdened resources of our criminal justice system.

As the Air India Commission so aptly said: "Finality is an important value in the criminal justice system".

As such, Bill C-2 includes provisions that would, in the spirit of recommendation 27 of the Air India Commission report, maintain the case management judge's ruling related to the disclosure or admissibility of evidence or the charter at any new trial ordered as a result of the declaration of a mistrial or in the event that a prosecution is severed into separate trials.

In addition, still with a view to reducing duplication of processes, Bill C-2 would allow the adjudication in a joint hearing of certain preliminary issues arising in separate trials. It is not uncommon that preliminary issues relating to the charter, disclosure or admissibility of evidence involve similar evidence and are raised in separate but related trials.

Currently, the evidence in support of these preliminary issues, which is at times very long and complex, needs to be adduced separately in each trial before different judges. Not only does this result in a duplication of effort and an inefficient use of resources, it also increases the risk of inconsistent rulings which reduces the public's confidence in the justice system.

Therefore, as proposed by the Air India Commission at recommendation 28 of its report, this bill would allow for such issues to be adjudicated at the same time at a joint hearing. These are significant gains in system effectiveness and efficiency that could result from this measure while preserving the accused's right to a fair trial.

Another issue addressed by this bill relates to the use of direct indictments. This special procedure requires the personal written consent of the Attorney General or Deputy Attorney General and allows the Crown, in special circumstances, to send a case directly to trial. Currently, where a bail hearing has been held in relation to an information, and a direct indictment is subsequently preferred for the same charges, the courts have held that the preferment is a new beginning in terms of judicial interim release. As such, a new bail hearing must be held, often requiring significant court time where multiple accused or counts are involved and the evidence is voluminous and complex.

An amendment is proposed in this bill that would eliminate this unnecessary duplication whereby bail or detention orders would be maintained where the prosecution prefers a direct indictment charging the same or an included offence.

Still on the issue of direct indictments, the Criminal Code currently allows the correction of technical defects on the face of standard indictments whereas this is not permitted in the case of direct indictments. This results in the Crown having to prefer a new direct indictment, which requires the personal written consent of the Attorney General or Deputy Attorney General. This unnecessary duplication of process is an inefficient use of resources. As such, a proposed amendment would empower the court to amend technical defects in direct indictments, as is currently allowed in the case of standard indictments.

As to otherwise improving criminal procedure, the bill contains other amendments aiming to generally improve criminal procedure. One of these would increase the number of jurors hearing the evidence from 12 to 14. The discharge of jurors throughout the course of an exceptionally long trial may reduce the jury below the Criminal Code minimum requirement of 10 jurors and result in a mistrial.

This legislative package includes amendments that would respond to this concern by allowing for the swearing of up to 14 jurors where circumstances warrant it. When the time comes to begin deliberations, if more than 12 jurors remain, a random selection process would determine the jurors to be released from duty to reduce the jury to 12.

• (1235)

Jury duty is a great service and requires significant time and effort by Canadian citizens. However, the alternative of declaring a mistrial and starting a trial anew not only reduces the public's confidence in the justice system but is also a considerable waste of resources from all sectors of the criminal justice system.

We are very cognizant of the onerous obligations on jurors and we believe the cumulative effect of the measures introduced here today would reduce the overall duration of proceedings, thus alleviating the burden on jurors.

This bill also proposes amendments that would provide for enhanced protection of juror identity. The amendments that respond to a recommendation from the report on jury reform by the steering committee on justice efficiencies and access to the justice system ensure that all jurors can participate without fear of intimidation.

The jury selection regime in the Criminal Code would be modified to have jurors systematically called in court by their number. The use of names would be the exception. Furthermore, access to juror cards or lists can be limited by the court when deemed necessary for the proper administration of justice. This is of particular importance in organized crime or terrorism prosecutions. These amendments strike a balance between the interests of the jurors and the public, the integrity of our justice system and the accused's right to a fair trial.

Finally, this legislation would make a corrective amendment to the French version of section 536.3 of the Criminal Code. This provision deals with the declaration containing a statement of issues and list of witnesses that the party requesting a preliminary inquiry must provide the court and the other party. The French language of this provision would be amended to render the language consistent with the intent reflected in the English.

The New Brunswick Court of Appeal, in its 2009 decision in *Gallant*, highlighted the current discrepancy.

The amendments proposed in this bill would serve to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the criminal justice system, particularly where long and complex trials are involved. Modernizing judicial tools to improve the conduct of long and complex trials would also be beneficial to the fight against organized crime and terrorism.

I trust that members will support this bill that seeks to improve our court's ability to conduct long, complex cases and make significant improvements to the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the first request on the opposition side is for the member to speak a bit about the role of the member for Windsor—Tecumseh. As we know, it is the NDP member for Windsor—Tecumseh who brought this idea forward and has been pushing and advocating for

legislation that would stop what many Canadians have been profoundly disappointed about, which is the fact that these trials often are not brought to fruition because of inadequacies that exist in current legislation.

We certainly pay tribute to the member for Windsor—Tecumseh for his work in promoting the fact that we need legislation. I would like the member to comment on the role played by the member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

• (1240)

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, we welcome the role of the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh. He has agreed that this is very necessary legislation for the efficiencies required within the criminal justice system so we can better deal with such long and complex trials. We welcome his support and are pleased that he has agreed with us that this is very necessary legislation to be put forward at this time.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, that was an excellent speech on the part of the member, but there has actually been another case where the official opposition has promoted solutions. Far from the government getting agreement from the NDP and the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, it is actually the opposite.

This is a case where the official opposition brought forward solutions to a problem that many Canadians know about and the government has chosen to agree, for which we thank it, but that was the intent of my question. Could the member actually talk about the fact that this is an NDP-originated idea and solution that is being brought forward? Some credit should go to the government because it is accepting the practical solutions that the NDP, as the official opposition, brought forward in the House.

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, our government first introduced this bill on November 2, 2010. At that time, we had six bills on the order paper and it was difficult to get any legislation passed in a minority Parliament. By the time the election was called, the Minister of Justice had 14 bills on the order paper.

We welcome this new co-operation by the opposition members with respect to our legislative agenda and we look forward to working with all members of the opposition with respect to these initiatives.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the hon. member to the House.

One of the bills she just described and the obstructionist ways of the opposition is stretching it a bit. It is a revision of history. One of the reasons a lot of these bills were put back to the starting point, we will say, was the proroguing of the House. The proroguing of the House did cancel these bills and we began from that very starting point once again. Perhaps she would like to comment on what effect the proroguing of the House did have on a lot of these justice bills.

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Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased with the strong mandate that the Canadian voters have given this government and with respect to their endorsement of our tough on crime approach and agenda.

With respect to the unnecessary election that was called, which led to many of the proposed legislative initiatives not proceeding, we are now doing our best to bring them forward. With respect to any co-operation from the opposition, we welcome it.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for Delta—Richmond East, not only for her election to this House but also to her position as parliamentary secretary.

I am very pleased to have the chance to speak to this bill on second reading. I have studied it extensively. I believe the approach to accelerating megatrials is sound, particularly with the appointment of a case management judge. This should help. I think all members of the House should also be cognizant that we need to do more. We will need more resources for judges. We need to appoint more judges at the federal level. Our provincial colleagues may also need more resources to ensure these trials go quickly.

I have one specific concern about one piece of legislation that I do not think is entirely necessary, and I would be grateful for the member's comments. My concern is about taking away the right of an accused person on preferred indictment to seek bail. It is not really a necessary piece of the legislation to accelerate trials. I wonder if she could speak to that.

• (1245)

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, all the measures in this bill are meant to increase efficiencies within the system. They are meant to deal with the preliminary aspects of these long and complex trials. There are changes with respect to the regular and preferred indictment provisions. However, if the member opposite would look at them more carefully, she would see that they do not lead to the conclusion she has drawn.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a number of years back, in Manitoba, there was a need to try to prosecute large numbers of members of gangs. They ended up having to create a separate court facility in order to accommodate the different type of trial that was expected.

Does the parliamentary secretary anticipate that there would be some additional costs incurred in terms of courtroom modifications or anything of that nature? Does this bill have anything to do with that sort of a potential expenditure going forward?

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, the actual workings of the courthouse environment are not within the purview of this ministry. However, I will say that the whole idea of this, what is being called, megatrials bill is to increase efficiencies and avoid duplication of processes. So, to the extent that it will work the way we envision that it will, and I see no reason why it would not, it will actually make it less necessary for larger accommodations.

In other words, these trials will be shortened and the procedures will be shortened. We will not have the same duplication of processes. With respect to where there are multiple accused, there is a provision that severance can be delayed. So, if there is evidence

arising that can be brought forward with respect to several accused, they do not each have to be treated separately in the process.

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a basic question for my colleague. Why is the government introducing this legislation? Obviously we have a strong crime agenda. We are looking forward to helping Canadians to be safe in their communities.

It is really a simple question. Why exactly is the government introducing this type of legislation?

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, essentially, there has been a lot of attention paid to these megatrials, multiple trials, particularly as they relate to organized crime and terrorism.

With our tough on crime agenda and our desire on this side of the House to ensure that justice is swift in Canada but fair, it is time to bring criminal trials like this to an earlier disposition. We also seek to avoid mistrials, which often arise because of the complexity of cases like these.

We are enthusiastic about the efficiencies that will be created in terms of resources, time, energy and for the general public's confidence in the justice system.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-2, which has become known as the megatrials bill.

The House and the Canadian public should be aware that this legislation has been a long time coming. The pressure for this has existed in the system for well over five years now. We began using megatrials in the criminal justice system maybe 12 to 13 years ago, and they have been far from successful. Several have literally collapsed completely, where 10 and 20 accused walked away without the trial ever being completed and with no subsequent charges.

I think, in particular, of the one case in Manitoba where a great deal of money was spent on building a whole new facility. A huge amount of hours of police time, prosecutor time, judicial time and the defence bar was involved. At the end of the day, the entire thing collapsed with no convictions. That probably is the most notorious failure of the megatrials, but they are necessary.

What has become obvious to a lot of people, and only recently to the government, is that there are some practical solutions to the problems we have confronted.

The bill was originally introduced by the government in November 2010. The reason the NDP has pressed the government to bring it back in now is because of a decision out of Quebec just two weeks ago in a megatrial involving organized crime in the form of the biker gangs. Something like 100-plus people were charged. Judge Brunton, who dealt with preliminary matters in the megatrial, concluded that 31 accused would have their charges dismissed because there was no way they would get to trial in less than 10 years. Therefore, we are faced with that reality. That is a clear finding of fact on his part.

Society is somewhat fortunate in that the charges that were dismissed were not the more serious ones. A murder charge, attempted murder, other violent assault type of crimes plus organized crime charges were involved in that megatrial, all against bikers in Quebec. The balance of the charges are still outstanding. Based on Judge Brunton's ruling, there are still some of those that may be at risk six months or a year from now. It is absolutely crucial that we get this legislation through as quickly as possible.

I am sure a number of people have heard that the leader of the Green Party in the House has some objection to the speedy passing of the bill. The Quebec minister of justice came here to discuss this with her, to encourage her to withdraw her objections to the speedy passage of the bill because the administration of justice in Quebec know how serious it would be if we did not get the bill into place as quickly as possible.

My party and I encourage the government to get this through. We were happy when it finally brought the motion forward today to speed it through. If we follow the motion, it will be done by Wednesday of next week. That will give the Senate time to look at it and get it through in the following few days. Even if our House is complete, the other House will still have time to finish it off before it breaks for the summer. Then the government will have the ability to get royal assent and we will see this in Canadian law by the end of this month. That is the plan.

• (1250)

I want to acknowledge that Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada was very quick to respond when I first spoke to him about this. I am critical of him because there were a whole bunch of other laws in the last Parliament that took precedence over this one.

I also want to acknowledge the co-operation from the Liberal Party critic. He was very quick to respond favourably to the quick passage of the bill.

The reason I am significantly critical of the government on this one is that if we go back and look at the history of the types of proposals in this bill, which will become the law of the country by the end of the month, almost all of them have been outstanding for several years.

We saw some of them come out of the Air India report by Justice Major. More extensively, we have had a number of these recommendations coming from the meetings of the attorneys general and solicitors general at the provincial and territorial level when they meet with the federal government, usually about every six months.

A number of them have been filtering through that. The government sat on them for this lengthy period of time. Those proposals go back for a number of years.

However, most important, I do not have any understanding or appreciation of why the government did not move immediately after the LeSage-Code report. Justice LeSage is the retired judge from Ontario. At the time Mr. Code was a professor and is now a justice in Ontario, as well.

In the period of 2007, and finally reporting in 2008, they were commissioned by the provincial Government of Ontario to conduct

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an analysis of how we could better handle, within the criminal justice system, megatrials, ensuring that they were fair, that due process was respected, those rights that we all have as Canadians under the Charter, but also that we had an efficient, speedy trial process, where due process was respected, but so were the rights of the accused and society as a whole.

Their report came out in 2008. It was very clear on almost everything that is in this bill. There were more recommendations than what is in the bill because other issues were dealt with in that report. We did not see a response, in the form of a bill, from the government until more than two years later. I do not have any understanding as to why that is, other than it had other bills it thought were more attractive politically for them to push than this one.

It is not the only time we have faced this. My proposal to speed a bill up occurred once before in 2010. It was known as the Shoker bill, which is the name of the case that went to the Supreme Court of Canada. It was a practical solution that we needed and it was strongly recommended by our police forces because it gave them an additional tool to deal with people who had breached their probation and parole.

It sat lingering on the order paper for almost two years, while we went through one of the prorogations and an election. Just before we broke for the end of the year, I made a similar proposal. It took me about two weeks to convince the government to do it. There was no explanation. It was a very simple bill. The proposal for the resolution of it had been outstanding for several years, but it needed to be pushed. It did not attract attention. It was not one of those photo op opportunities for the government.

Having that experience, and finally convincing the government to do it in that case, we felt we should do the same thing for this. Of course it was triggered in particular by that decision in Quebec of a couple of weeks ago.

I also want to be clear about the importance of getting this through. The Quebec case is not the only megatrial case going on in the country right now. There are at least several others and there are some others coming. We just had a major raid in Ontario, either yesterday or the day before, that is likely to end up in a megatrial.

Based on the ruling from Judge Brunton in the Quebec case, with absolute certainty, I am sure defence lawyers on behalf of the accused are looking at that decision and wondering whether they can apply it in some of these other megatrials, having additional accused persons discharged before we have the opportunity to actually prosecute them, presuming sufficient evidence to convict them.

• (1255)

There is a risk here, beyond the consequences of the Quebec case, as there are others outstanding where we may be faced with the same thing.

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I have one more point and I want to be careful about this because the case is still before the court. However, I urge both the Government of Canada and the province of Quebec to consider an appeal in that case. The reason I feel comfortable in saying this is that Judge Brunton, in his decision, made reference to the fact that Bill C-53, which was the bill that preceded this in the last Parliament, was outstanding. Had we had that, his decision might have been different.

Based on the general rule against substantive laws being retroactive, the immediate reaction is that it would not make any difference if we appeal it. However, that is not correct. In law, if the issue of retroactivity is applicable, it is applicable when it is not substantive law. This bill is all procedural. It is process law rather than substantive law.

Therefore, I urge the government to take into account that principle of law and appeal the decision. I urge the province of Quebec to do the same thing and introduce before the court of appeal the fact that this bill is now law and could be applied to the megatrial that is going on in Quebec retroactively.

It is urgent that we get the bill through so we may be able to salvage those 31 charges in Quebec and forestall those types of dismissals in any number of other megatrials, either ones that are already started or ones that may be coming in the near future.

If we leave it to the normal process, the bill will not become law. It would go through committee and all the hearings that would take at least several more months, and we are going to have the summer break soon. If we do not get this through next week and have it in law by the end of the summer, it will probably be the end of the year, or more likely into 2012 before the bill becomes law. For the sake of the protection of our society right across the country, we cannot afford the luxury of waiting that long.

There has been criticism of pushing a bill like this through, as it is a fairly extensive bill, and whether we are going through the democratic process. I certainly have been critical of the government at times when it tried to force bills of a substantive nature through. Again, that is not what this bill is.

We have had a lot of time to analyze the bill. When I say "we", I am speaking of the justice critics of the various parties in the House. Over the last five or six years, we have looked at the issue. The response we needed to make as a legislature was very clear, and we have understood that. There is nothing in this bill that I can see that calls for an extensive review of it.

I want to particularly emphasize the process of the LeSage-Code report. The end result of that report was one that was supported because prosecutors, other judicial members and the defence bar were all involved in the work that was done in preparing the report. When it came out, I did not hear anybody from the bar, prosecutors, the defence or the judiciary who were critical of the recommendations of LeSage-Code report. I did not hear any objections to it at all. Everybody has looked at this and thinks this is the way to keep the megatrial, but do it efficiently and in fairness to the accused.

I know we have allowed for very short hearings before the justice committee next week, but if we were to have extensive hearings, we

would hear from the defence bar, the prosecution and judges that this would be the way to go.

I want to make one more point in this regard. When I first began looking at this, I had a sense of déjà vu. I went through this in my practice back in the mid-1980s to mid-1990s in Ontario in the civil court cases. We implemented the case management process, and not just for large trials, although that was where it was most effective, but for all civil cases.

● (1300)

It had a positive impact in Ontario and has been adopted, though I am not sure about Quebec, in all the other common law jurisdictions.

The idea behind it is simply to let the judiciary in this country take control of files, so that if one side or the other in the case wants to delay the matter unreasonably, the case management judge is there to control the process. It has been reasonably effective. It is not perfect on the civil side and it will not be perfect on the criminal law side, but it is a methodology that makes our system more efficient and, quite frankly, more fair.

One can imagine, in the Quebec case, a witness waiting 10 years to testify, an innocent bystander and witness from the general community having to come back after 10 years and testify against an accused. How well do members think a person's memory is going to last?

Witnesses also know they have this hanging over their heads, that they are witnesses and there is a need for them to be prepared on a repeated basis. There are any number of reasons why we should move on this with regard to protecting, not just the accused and the rights of the accused but the other parties involved, such as police, prosecutors, and society as a whole in terms of the witnesses who get called in these kinds of cases.

The parliamentary secretary has done an excellent job of summarizing the legislation. I am not going to go through it in any particular detail. I wanted to mention case management because that is sort of the key to this working.

The idea, for instance, is for two extra jurors to be empanelled. There have been several trials where they went all the way and in the last week or two ran below 10 jurors. In our system, 12 are empanelled but there have to be 10 to make the final decision.

We never want the accused, witnesses or the system as a whole being put through the process of a long criminal trial and then in the last week or two having to start over again because three jurors became ill in the process and could not continue. Having 14 jurors empanelled will probably eliminate that from ever happening again. I use that as one example.

The other big example is avoiding duplication in the process by having one judge responsible for all of the preliminary matters. That has been a major problem for megatrials in terms of stringing them out. It has also opened up the door many times for appeals because preliminary matters are dealt with by more than one judge and sometimes there will be conflicting decisions. Once there is a conflicting decision, it is almost an automatic appeal and the Court of Appeal must decide, of the conflicting decisions, which one is the right one.

It is a good bill. I do not want to take that away at all from the government. As I said, it flows out of both the major report in the Air India case and more particularly from the Lesage-Code report. Those recommendations were followed and it is time for Parliament to do its job.

As I said, when I asked my question of the minister, the police have done their job, the prosecutors have done theirs, and it is time for Parliament to do its job by getting this bill through.

* * *

• (1305)

POINTS OF ORDER

AIR CANADA

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Our government remains focused on Canada's economic recovery and the financial security of all Canadians. As the House knows our government received a strong mandate for Canadians to complete our recovery.

Today, I am very pleased to report to all Canadians and the House that minutes ago Air Canada and the Canadian Auto Workers signed an agreement in principle to bring an end to the work stoppage and return full service for passengers within 24 hours.

I want to applaud the efforts of the parties in focusing their attention to the matter and, of course, on our federal mediation services. The government's position on Air Canada has been clear. The best agreement is always the one the parties reach themselves.

The objective of the legislation that we put forward today has been achieved and we are so very pleased that there will be a resumption of service for Air Canada passengers. We remain committed to protecting Canadians and keeping our economy growing, strong and on track.

• (1310)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I am not so sure that was a point of order but nonetheless I am sure it will be welcomed by all members.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on what could be a question of privilege or a point of information, or just a good point.

Having heard that we have a resolution in this matter, I would like to thank the Minister of Labour, the government, and all parties that participated in this. I know that negotiations went late last night. I know negotiations took place today. In an economic recovery, we have to remember the workers too, and respect the workers and the rights they have under the law regarding free bargaining and the right to strike.

[Translation]

Now, I encourage the minister and her government to work just as hard to get an agreement signed at Canada Post to ensure that it is a collective agreement that sends employees back to work instead of legislation. There is work to be done. The government will not have to work on the Air Canada issue over the weekend, but it must now work hard to ensure that Canada Post workers receive the same

respect and are able to sign a collective agreement, which will also be good for the economic recovery.

[English]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate those who worked very hard to come to this very satisfactory resolution. I think everyone is relieved and we are very glad this state of affairs has occurred. At the same time, I would also like to make the point that we must respect the bargaining process. Let us always bear that in mind when there is this kind of situation. I think that is very important for the future.

I would also like to take note, once again, of the main reason this conflict occurred and why there is a conflict at Canada Post, and there will be conflicts at other places. This touches upon the very important issue of pensions and people's retirement security. This is something we as a House of Commons must address in the future because this is a problem that will not go away.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I would like to join the minister and my colleagues in saying that I am glad that the situation at Air Canada has been resolved. I congratulate the negotiators who were able to come to an agreement in principle. This is good news not only for the employees, but also for the passengers and all the people who are no doubt preparing for vacations at this time of year.

The Bloc Québécois is obviously happy about this news, but, like my colleagues, I want to say that announcing or enacting legislation is not the way to bring about a quick resolution at Canada Post. The government must focus on a negotiated agreement, as was done with Air Canada. Unionized workers should not have a sword of Damocles hanging over their heads, forcing them to accept what the employer wants to give them, because this would upset the balance of power.

I repeat my request to the minister to ensure that a negotiated agreement is signed at Canada Post as quickly as possible. That is what everyone wants.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge that this is not a proper point of order at all, but I would like to congratulate the Minister of Labour for her efforts. I would like to congratulate members on all sides of this House for collaborative efforts and particularly to hope that the collective bargaining rights of unions in this country will continue to be respected.

* * *

FAIR AND EFFICIENT CRIMINAL TRIALS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mega-trials), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

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Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is apparent that this bill introduces a practical solution and balances the interests and necessity of the efficient administration of justice in a fair way while respecting the rights of the accused.

From the hon. member's comments, I ponder if he is simply attempting to play politics with this issue. The government introduced this bill in November 2010. Not once during the last Parliament did the hon. member ask that this bill be expedited. Suddenly, there is a sense of urgency in his comments.

Believe me, the government would certainly have welcomed any co-operation from the opposition on our justice agenda. Now that the member's party, largely founded in Quebec, and the issue have come to the forefront and into the headlines, the member has discovered a new-found interest in this justice issue.

I would like to ask the member, will his new sense of co-operation extend to the rest of our justice legislation, or will his party only be supporting legislation that plays well for it politically, specifically in Quebec?

• (1315)

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the parliamentary secretary for justice, for the question and congratulate him on his appointment.

Of course, he is new to the position, so the question I think ignores the reality of what has happened and the role that I personally have played and, more importantly, that my party has played on getting justice bills through the House in an efficient fashion as opposed to the politics that his party has historically played.

It is really quite offensive the number of times that party has trotted out victims of crime in this country to use them as photo ops, as props. It did not do it just once in a number of these bills. I can think of several bills where it was done three times. The reason it was done three times, or there was the opportunity to do it three times, was because the government would prorogue Parliament or call an election in contravention of legislation that the Prime Minister himself shoved through this House. Therefore, there were three times that victims were trotted out and used as props for the government.

I did not come to this late. I have already told the story about the Shoker. It took me two and a half months of recommendations to the government to get it to agree. We only got it because we were coming near the end of the year last year and we got that through. However, I had suggested that over a two and a half month period before we got that one through. That one took precedence. This one was the next one. If we would have had enough time without the election intervening, I would have pushed this one through earlier as well.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Windsor for making reference in his comments to the terrible time that we have had in the province of Manitoba, which I suppose leads toward the argument for the need of this bill. Until now and until the time we get this bill passed, it does concern me that organized crime is laughing at us. It really is.

In my industry of construction, we have now learned that to a huge extent the bikers, especially, have infiltrated it as a perfect way to launder drug money. These guys have warehouses of \$20 bills that they cannot use because they are hot dollars. They are called "labour pimps" because they become labour brokers. They contract out 20 or 30 illegal immigrants to legitimate contractors as cheap labour. They pay them \$20 an hour with drug money, half the going rate, and then get reimbursed by the contractor with real dollars. It is ubiquitous across British Columbia. It is undermining the integrity of the entire tendering and contracting process in British Columbia because if contractors do not use the biker "labour pimps", they will not win a contract because their labour costs will be legitimate while their labour costs are paid with drug money.

The biker trial, the "show trial", in Manitoba collapsed under its own weight. Could the hon. member assure us that this bill that we have agreed to fast track and support will ameliorate this embarrassment where these bikers are thumbing their noses at Canadians knowing full well that we do not have the capacity to bring justice through our court system as it currently stands?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, obviously I cannot give absolute assurance, but I will just use this one example that the parliamentary secretary herself raised.

In a great deal of the megatrials, time is spent on preliminary objections such as, has full disclosure been given by the prosecution, should this electronic surveillance material be allowed or excluded, and have there been infringements of the accused's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

As it stands now, those motions generally are handled this way. Every single accused, or his or her counsel on his or her behalf, gets to argue. Oftentimes they are all arguing about the same evidence, has disclosure been given to accused A, B, C, D, E, F, G. They all get to make the argument and most of the time before different judges.

What this will do is consolidate all of them before the same judge, so there will not be the problem of conflicts in terms of decisions. As soon as there is a conflict wherein one judge says that there has been full disclosure and then judge D says that there has not been, it then becomes wide open for appeal and the Court of Appeal must resolve it. Therefore, by consolidating that it will certainly make the process more efficient and quite frankly, it will make it fair.

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● (1320)

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate on the fair and efficient criminal trials act, otherwise known as Bill C-2, which is intended to address, not only the issue of megatrials but what has come to be known as the megatrial phenomenon. This phenomenon usually involves a large amount of complex evidence, numerous charges against multiple accused, the need to call many witnesses, multiple motions on matters of law, evidence, remedy—usually the constitutionalization of criminal law finds expression in this regard—and the related roles of the police, the crown, the defence attorney, the jury—and we should remember that not all of these trials involve a jury—the trial judge and case management judge. These trials have become all-consuming, resulting in a backlog in the current system, excessive delays and often an increased risk of mistrial.

It has long been argued by stakeholders in the justice system that the government and Parliament need to engage themselves in the reform and refinement of this process, along with other actors in the system, so that we can properly address and redress a situation whereby what is at stake at this point is not only the fair and efficient administration of justice but the integrity of justice itself.

Statements made by the courts themselves and leading judicial officials have expressed concern about this problem for some time. For example, in a speech to the Empire Club on March 8, 2007, titled, “The Challenges We Face”, Chief Justice McLachlin stated that murder trials used to take five to seven days in the recent past but now they last five to seven months. She described these changes as giving rise to “urgent problems and incalculable costs”.

In a similar but much earlier speech on April 13, 1995, also to the Empire Club, entitled, “The Role of Judges”, former Chief Justice Antonio Lamer described the complexity and prolixity in legal proceedings as being “our greatest challenge and one that could render the justice system simply irrelevant unless it is solved”. One needs to take note of those words.

In a unanimous judgment of the Supreme Court in 2005 dealing with a particularly complex species of wiretap motion, the Supreme Court adopted a much earlier pronouncement of Justice Finlayson made in the Ontario Court of Appeal in 1992 to the effect that:

...“our criminal trial process” has become “bogged down” in an “almost Dickensian procedural morass” and that the public would soon “lose patience with our traditional adversarial system of justice.”

He might well have added, and has been added since, that the public loses confidence in the administration if not integrity of justice as a whole.

When I was the minister of justice, I worked with my provincial and territorial counterparts who not only expressed similar concerns but also sought to initiate what is before the House today in the form of a fair and efficient trials bill. I and my colleague, Jacques Dupuis, the minister of justice and public security in Quebec at the time, worked on this initiative along with our counterparts.

These concerns also found expression, for example, in the 2007 meeting of federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for justice and public safety in Winnipeg on November 15, 2007, when the following communiqué was issued:

Ministers also agreed with the recommendations from officials to improve the way large and complex trials are conducted. The officials recommended legislative amendments to reduce the risk of mistrials and address some of the difficulties associated with the management of mega-trials, among others.

● (1325)

It is important for us to appreciate, as we address this prospective legislation before us, the context and the causes that have brought us to this point. An understanding of those causes and the context will not only give us a better appreciation of the *raison d'être* for this bill, but also for the manner in which we need to approach this bill in Parliament and in our committee considerations.

Simply put, there are four major events that have played a rather transformative role in the development of the modern criminal trial process from what used to be a short and somewhat efficient examination of guilt or innocence that existed in the 1970s to the now much longer and more complex process that has been discussed and indeed critiqued in the statements to which I alluded above.

These four causal events and the related context are as follows. First, the adoption of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms had a transformative impact on our laws, if not our lives, and of which Chief Justice Lamer spoke of as ushering in a constitutional revolution in this country.

Second, the reform of the evidence law by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Third, the addition of many new complex statutory provisions to the Criminal Code and other related statutes.

Fourth, certain compelling social phenomenon, as evidenced in the development of organized crimes and their prosecutions in the 1990s and the immediate aftermath of 9/11 and the adoption of anti-terrorism legislation and related amendments to a number of pieces of legislation for that purpose.

I will now say a few words about each of these causes which will put what we have before us in context.

The first transformative event was the constitutionalization of criminal law and procedure resulting from the passage of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The charter articulated long-standing rights, added some new rights and, most important, introduced a set of remedies, which rights and remedies can be found in sections 7 to 14 of the charter.

In effect, this institutes a constitutional code of criminal procedure. These developments inevitably led to a broad range of procedural motions that had not previously existed in order to enforce the rights and remedies now embodied in the charter.

These motions were complex, both factually and legally. They took additional time to hear and resolve. So the criminal trial process began to become both more complex and prolonged.

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I can give a number of different cases as examples, but I will take one right out of the LeSage-Code report. One of the case studies that they examined, the case of Fatima Khan, was a murder case involving allegations that the two accused had killed and dismembered their young child. The trial itself was relatively speedy, lasting about 35 court days. The preliminary inquiry had taken seven days.

The important point that needs to be appreciated here is the fact that the pretrial motions, resulting from the constitutionalization of criminal law and procedure, extended over a two and a half year period where many of the pretrial motions involved charter issues.

The second causal event that contributed to the long and complex process in the modern era was the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada to fundamentally reform the law of evidence. These reforms had the general effect, as the LeSage-Code report shows, of broadening, one might say, the scope of admissibility of evidence by replacing the old rules-based approach of common law with a much more flexible principles-based approach.

● (1330)

I can give a number of examples but for reasons of time I will limit myself to one. The hearsay rule is significantly changed, so that certain out of court statements that would never have been admissible under the pre-existing law, now became admissible. Also, the voluntariness test for confessions was also changed.

These significant changes to evidence law, like the changes in a constitutionalization of criminal law and procedure, led to their own set of motions, in addition to the new charter motion. These motions concerning the admissibility of evidence of common law were now characterized by much greater flexibility than the old rules-based approach.

I will now go to a third causal event, and that was the continuous stream of statutory amendments that took place at the same time as the above development with respect to the charter and with respect to evidentiary developments. Simply put, over the past 20 years, Parliament has constantly altered and added to the existing body of statute law found in the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the previous Young Offenders Act and Youth Criminal Justice Act.

The Criminal Code, it is not always appreciated, is now about double the size that it was only 30 years ago. The new legislation is increasingly complex, unfamiliar, untested, and this too has resulted in more lengthy and complex proceedings.

Finally, some of the new legislation was passed in relation to and expanded upon in a legislative and judicial manner, a social phenomenon of the last 20 years. I am speaking in particular of the gang related violence which began to increase in the nineties, especially in Quebec, which now has provided a trigger for the more immediate addressing of this issue today, to which my colleague has just spoken to, and the new criminal organizations provisions of the Criminal Code which were added at that time.

Similarly, there is a large number of new offences and new procedures relating to both law, evidence and constitutional considerations, as well as remedies resulting from the adoption of the anti-terrorist acts.

It can be seen that the criminal trial courts have had to absorb, in a word, a continuing almost explosion of new charter law and remedies, new common law evidence principles, new legislative procedures and new offences, and addressing new social phenomena over the past 20 to 30 years. It is hardly surprising then in these circumstances that what used to be referred to as the short, simple and somewhat efficient criminal trials of the seventies has been replaced by the long, complex and often inefficient criminal trials of the 21st century.

I would not wish to have it adversely inferred from my remarks that I am not in favour of these developments. I supported the advent of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the constitutionalization within it of criminal law and procedure and remedy. I supported the initiatives that arose from Supreme Court considerations of our law of evidence. Developments in the Criminal Code, to which I referred, were themselves warranted and the social phenomenon to which I was speaking also had to bring about those necessary changes and reforms in law procedure, evidence and remedy.

What we have to realize, however, is that the convergence of these four major transformed developments, of which I have been speaking, during a rather specific time in our recent history, has placed an enormous burden, particularly on the legal system and within it, specifically on the trial courts.

At this point I will speak to some of the considerations that have emerged from these four transformed events which, in effect, have identified or exacerbated certain weaknesses in our justice system. I will relate to simply three rather systemic or cultural tendencies, as the LeSage-Code report spoke of, that have themselves worsened and are not unrelated to these four transformed causal events, and which have to be borne in mind as well as we move with respect to creating a more fair and efficient criminal justice system to deal with this megatrail phenomenon.

● (1335)

The first systemic cultural observation, as set forth in the LeSage-Code report, is that the new charter remedies, the new evidence law, the motions, the statutory procedures, et cetera, all that I summarized above, share one common feature. They generally involve pretrial proceedings, in particular the development of elaborate pretrial motions practice which has had the effect of thereby delaying the trial and making it more complex.

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A second broad cultural phenomenon that has emerged from this intense period of law reform, as summarized above, is that the system has become both error prone and fearful of error, in a kind of ironic dialectic. Simply, the avalanche of new and complex legal procedures, whether from the charter or from statutory amendments to the Criminal Code, or from reform of the law of evidence, has created a legal system with difficult and nuanced decision points. It is not surprising, therefore, that there are errors that occur in this new environment. At the same time, it has made judges, lawyers, et cetera, more cautious and fearful because of this error-prone impulse. So, that too has helped to contribute to overly long trials. In fact, it suggests the need for judges with real expertise who will be effectively able to manage these cases, especially at the pretrial stage, and that underpins the importance of the case management judge, the reform of which is in the legislation itself.

The third and last of these broad systemic and cultural changes that I wish to refer to, though I cannot enlarge upon it but I think it will have a popular resonance, is the significant increase in animosity and acrimony between counsel in these proceedings, along something that the LeSage-Code report has commented and elaborated upon. Simply put, this development results, itself, in the prolonging of the trial process as the increased adversarial action on a personal level tends to result in the trial process becoming more acrimonious and fewer matters being resolved within the legal process or settled outside of it. So, here too all the stakeholders have a role to play to encourage the judiciary to insist on higher standards of civility in their courts, for the various law societies to take a strong disciplinary role in this area and for legal aid societies to exercise their statutory mandate to grant certificates to those counsels who can deliver high, effective and efficient legal services.

In closing, let me now turn to some of the specific provisions in the legislation itself. Let me begin first with the definition of megatrials. Although the whole purpose and rationale of this legislation is to address complex megatrials, the legislation itself lacks a definition of what constitutes a megatrial. The proposed section 551.1, as the Canadian Bar Association recently pointed out in its comments on this legislation, would permit an application by either party or the court to have a case management judge appointed on any trial, no matter how simple. This lack of a more specific definition has the potential to result in an overuse of such applications and appointments. It could then drain judicial resources and result in cases that do not need the detailed case management that the bill envisages in having case management judges assigned.

• (1340)

If time had permitted, I would have referred to the other considerations, which are as follows. First is the need for the appointment of a case management judge. The definition of his powers has been referred to by the parliamentary secretary and my colleagues, so I need not go into this, other than to say there needs to be close collaboration between that judge and the trial judge.

Second is that the bill streamlines the use of direct indictments and allows for delayed severance orders related to recommendations in that regard. Third is the proposal to increase the protection of jurors and to increase the maximum number of jurors. That, too, may require certain consideration at committee stage. Finally, there are the matters of mistrial.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's opinion and views I have the utmost respect for. He speaks from vast experience and knowledge of the criminal justice system when he shares his views today on the problems we face with these megatrials collapsing under their own weight.

I am wondering if my colleague has taken note and observed the problem in the province of Manitoba of actively trying to curb the activities of the criminal element of bikers. Some of the worst biker wars the country has ever seen, second only perhaps to Montreal, were playing out on the streets of Winnipeg. We should stop calling them biker gangs as it has kind of a cachet to it. This is one gang of organized criminals fighting another gang of organized criminals over the same turf.

After years and years of detailed investigation, when we finally compiled enough evidence to lay charges, 30 and 40 charges at a time, we built a separate courthouse. We were so concerned about the safety of witnesses, et cetera, we built an independent, free-standing courthouse. I believe it cost \$28 million for the courthouse alone. Because of the bogging down of proceedings, et cetera, this trial collapsed under its own weight, the courthouse was never even used and not a single person ever gave testimony because the lawyers played the system to the point where the criminals thumbed their nose at us and walked away.

I would ask my colleague to share with us whether he is satisfied that the bill we are going to give speedy passage to today would satisfy the concerns that led to the farce in Manitoba where the bikers won and the public lost.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to that important question.

As minister of justice, I worked with my counterpart, the provincial attorney general, in Manitoba and I made express reference in my remarks to the important decision taken at the 2007 meeting that took place in Winnipeg of federal, provincial and territorial ministers of justice on the need, as was already expressed then in Winnipeg, four years ago, to address and redress these concerns.

That is why I am pleased that such an initiative has belatedly, in my view, but finally and necessarily come before us. However, I think we also have to proceed with an appreciation that if we pass the bill simply as it is, we may not incorporate some of the more important concerns and considerations to which I was referring in my remarks and to which I will make specific reference now.

I agree, of course, that the principle of having a case management judge who can focus the issues, streamline the pretrial motions and make suggestions to the parties are necessary in the context of a megatrial. The bill's proposals, if used properly, could assist in the administration of such a megatrial.

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However, the proposal, to discuss just one, to allow the case management judge to make rules binding on the parties are somewhat too far-reaching and would, I believe, have some undesirable effects. For more comments on this, I would refer everyone to the LeSage-Code report, but this should be considered at committee. It is also vital that the trial judge and no other judge makes rules regarding the admissibility of evidence and that the proper relationship exist between the trial judge and the case management judge.

I also want to say with respect to jurors, that while the reform proposal has merit, it should be limited only to those trials specifically defined as megatrials and not all trials and consideration should be given to a provision that allows a trial judge to convert a jury trial to a judge-alone trial on consent of all parties when the jury composition falls below the minimum requirement of 10. This would promote efficiency and negate the need for costly mistrials.

On the issue of mistrials, while there is an important proposal to make certain rulings in the previous mistrial binding on the new trial, it is important—

● (1345)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I appreciate the member's enthusiasm and interest in sharing the information, but we do need to get on. I think there may be other questions.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice.

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, regarding the hon. member's comments on the exercise of the judicial decision being far-reaching and on the appointment of a case management judge, would he not agree that independence of the judiciary is a basic tenet of our free and democratic society? Therefore, it is a reasonable clause to allow discretion to remain within both a case management judge or the trial judge who brings that case management judge into the matter.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, the issue is not the independence of the judiciary. Of course, that is taken as a given. The issue is the relationship between the case management judge and the trial judge, and when the case management judge is brought into the process, which should be done at the earliest possible moment. The issue is having consideration that, when it involves a provincial court judge, he or she may not have the authority of a superior court judge to make certain rulings and have constitutional considerations.

I was talking about the relationship between the case management judge and the presiding trial judge and the need to refine those relationships in the course of this prospective legislative where it is appropriate and able to do so.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Mount Royal has given a fascinating discourse. I do not think I have heard anyone refer casually to an ironic dialectic in this place. I am grateful and I would ask him to expand on any of his points in the time remaining.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, as time did not permit, I would like to make some reference to the question of costs as it can also be a drain on the system.

This particular legislation may not always appreciate some of the unintended consequences or even of necessary amendments with respect to the burdens on the system itself. It may require other actors, the federal and provincial governments, to involve themselves with respect to the proper allocation of resources such as the judiciary, crown attorneys and the involvement of probably the most senior attorneys in this regard, with respect to the legal aid and ensuring appropriate access to justice, we need to also look at the various models, and the provincial attorney general would do so, to see where the best case management models have occurred and what kind of changes would be needed, not only with regard to costs.

To conclude, if this legislation is going to work in the way we need it to work, then it is going to involve every actor in the legal system in general and the criminal justice system in particular. It is going to involve each of these actors to see how they can work in a most effective and collaborative model.

I do not think the reforms are going to end with this piece of legislation. As I said, federal and provincial governments, as well as our own Parliament are going to have to look beyond this legislation for the necessary reforms that will have to take place.

● (1350)

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since this is my first speech in the House, I would like to begin by thanking the people of Ahuntsic for placing their trust in me and re-electing me for a third term. I would like to assure them that I will do what I have always done: I will prove worthy of that trust. I am very proud to represent them here. I would also like to thank my family members who have always supported me during my election campaigns and my many terms in office. As we all know, to be a woman in politics who has children, you need a good husband and a good mother. Finally, I would like to thank my entire team, the election committee and the volunteers, as well as the members of the Bloc Québécois, who worked so hard during the election campaign.

Before speaking about Bill C-2, I would like to tell the people of my riding and all Quebecers, the 24% of men and women who voted for the Bloc Québécois, that my colleagues and I will make every effort to make their voices heard in this House and to protect their interests. I will also do my best to establish the ties of solidarity needed to allow our people to become what it should be, a nation that is the master of its own destiny, with all the authority necessary to take charge of its economic, social and cultural development.

Bill C-2 is essentially the former Bill C-53 from the previous Parliament. Members of the Bloc Québécois were in favour of this bill and, clearly, we still are, even more so because we understand the importance of mega-trials. Quebec is unique in that it has a large number of mega-trials. Recently, there have been more arrests on aboriginal reserves.

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I would like to first like to make a clarification. The bill in question respects the Government of Quebec's jurisdiction in the area of justice. In our opinion, there is no encroachment on jurisdictions. This bill seeks to implement a number of measures to simplify mega-trials. These include streamlining the use of direct indictments; improving the protection of jurors' identity, which is very important, since criminals involved in this type of trial very often tend to use intimidation; increasing the maximum number of jurors; and, in the case of a mistrial, providing that certain decisions made during the trial are binding on the parties in any new trial. One of the bill's key measures is the appointment of a judge who is specifically responsible for managing the mega-trial in question.

However, this bill does not address one of Justice Brunton's criticisms. On May 31, he freed 31 criminal bikers because they could not be tried in a timely manner. This is questionable. The message we are sending to criminals is to come to Quebec because there is not enough money or resources to put them on trial, so they will be freed. For example, Operation SharQC, which cost millions of dollars in police operations, resulted in 31 bikers being let go. That is absurd.

One of Justice Brunton's main criticisms is the obvious need for judges in the Superior Court. But Superior Court appointments are made by the federal government. We feel it is time to free the Quebec government and the governments of the other provinces from this quasi-colonial dependence concerning Superior Court appointments. Quebec is not master of its domain in this area and neither are the other provinces. This applies to everyone. Consequently, the federal government is directly responsible for the disastrous release of 31 bikers on May 31.

• (1355)

And we feel that the federalist politicians in the House are silent on this topic. Are they not somewhat uncomfortable maintaining provincial dependence in this area, given that federal appointment of judges dates from a quasi-colonial era?

If the Brunton decision is upheld on appeal, the Government of Quebec, and Quebec's justice minister in particular, should be held responsible for the judicial disaster of May 31. It is their responsibility to ensure that there are enough lawyers and resources to have trials happen within a reasonable time frame.

However, the facts clearly show that the Quebec government does not yet have all the tools needed to completely control justice within its borders. For example, Quebec's justice minister was recently in a position where he had to practically beg for the support of every single parliamentarian to have Bill C-2 passed quickly.

This demonstrates how dependent the Quebec government is in administering justice within its borders when, we feel, it should have complete responsibility in this area. I will say it again: this dependence is irrefutably demonstrated by the fact that the federal government appoints judges. Do these types of relationships need to be maintained in order for Canada to continue to exist? Will it someday be possible to free ourselves from these counterproductive relationships that belong to another era?

The majority of my colleagues in the House would like Quebec to stay in Canada. But could they imagine for a few seconds or a few

minutes a Canada where there would be more respect for nations, namely the people of Quebec whom they claim to recognize as a nation within a united Canada? In fact, I would like to see that respect in all the provinces.

I invite my colleagues to think about that. Are we to continue accepting as normal the fact that the federal government appoints judges in cases where the provinces should be responsible for the management and administration of justice? This obviously includes the nation of Quebec, as we were recognized here as a nation. The provinces could appoint their own judges and make decisions about their judicial resources without having to beg Ottawa for the authority to administer their own justice system in a normal way.

Not only were the people of Quebec astounded by the release of these 31 bikers, but in the policing community, people were not very happy about having worked for nothing and having paid millions of dollars for the police operations. As a private citizen and the member for Ahuntsic, I found this to be mind-boggling. Having worked in criminology and with the police on a regular basis and knowing this type of individual, I can say that they laughed their heads off. The justice system came across as rather pathetic.

I invite my colleagues to think about that. We will support this bill, which is a step in the right direction, but the heart of the problem is that the provinces and the nation of Quebec should be able to make decisions with respect to their judges. I am not just talking about their appointment, but also about how many should be appointed. The problem in Quebec was that there were not enough judges, not enough lawyers, not enough courtrooms and not enough cases. That is a serious problem that runs quite deep. We have to take this further than just one simple bill, no matter how good it is. We are not against the bill and we plan to vote in favour of it.

In closing, public safety is not just about putting people behind bars or passing a few bills; it is also about providing the necessary resources to enforce the law. Creating laws is one thing, but enforcing them is another.

* * *

• (1400)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in light of the announcement made earlier today in the House by the Minister of Labour, we have some new opportunities with regard to House business.

As such, I wish to designate Monday, June 20 as an allotted day. This will be in lieu of the allotted day I earlier designated on Tuesday, June 21. Wednesday, June 22 will remain the last allotted day in the supply period.

*Government Orders**[Translation]***FAIR AND EFFICIENT CRIMINAL TRIALS ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mega-trials) be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Ahuntsic and congratulate her on her re-election. I have a question for her in response to her speech. If the appointment of superior court judges were delegated to the provinces, how would that speed up the trial process?

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question. The answer is very simple. Justice Brunton said there was a serious shortage of judges. There are several factors, such as court rooms, lawyers, and so on, but there is also a serious shortage of judges. The number of judges cannot be determined by Quebec or any other province. The federal government decides that.

Since Quebec is supposedly a nation and the administration of justice is supposed to be left to the provinces and the Quebec nation, which has been recognized by this House—within a united Canada, of course—then they should be able to appoint judges. Judges are one of the foundations, the very pillars, of our justice system. We need to have an appropriate number of judges for Quebec. Perhaps 12 or 13 judges are enough for Ontario. In Quebec, there are many mega-trials. We have a particular situation involving bikers and street gangs. Within our police culture in Quebec, it is quite common to conduct large-scale police operations to catch many criminals belonging to the same organization and to hold mega-trials.

Quebec created the Gouin Judicial Services Centre to address our very particular criminal situation. In fact, anti-gang legislation originated in Quebec.

Considering our particular situation in that regard, we have specific needs regarding the number and selection of judges. This power needs to be handed over to the provinces so that each province and the Quebec nation can decide what is best for them. However, if the federal government is the one to decide, our hands are tied and we have to wait for the government.

[English]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I, too, agree that Quebec has taken some extraordinary necessary steps to deal with organized crime because the province of Quebec has been plagued with extraordinary problems with biker gangs. I sympathize with that fully. My province of Manitoba is similarly cursed with the overwhelming influence of organized crime in the form of biker gangs.

Would the hon. member briefly comment on another initiative in this same vein, whereby we could seize the proceeds of crime from bikers? Nothing bothers police and criminal justice officials more than driving past a biker leader's house to see that he has a boat, a car, a Ski-Doo, a Cadillac, an Escalade and no visible means of support for the last 20 years. Would she agree that we should be able to put a reverse onus bikers? If the bikers cannot prove where they got the money to buy all that stuff, we should be able to seize it from them, auction it off and put that money toward further prosecutions?

● (1405)

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for giving me the opportunity to comment on this matter.

I would like to remind my colleague that the Bloc Québécois fought for the seizure of proceeds of crime, and won. At this time, proceeds of crime are seized.

However, there is an important measure that could be implemented. In Montreal—and I believe the same thing is happening throughout Canada—street gangs in particular have started to get out of the drug trade and to concentrate solely on human trafficking and prostitution.

The seizure of proceeds of crime does not apply to procuring or alleged human trafficking. It applies to drugs and under other Criminal Code sections, but paradoxically it does not apply to human trafficking, one activity of these gang members, and it does not apply to procuring in particular.

This measure should be added to the Criminal Code. Perhaps my colleague remembers that I introduced a bill on human trafficking, which included these two measures. Under the bill, if a person was found guilty of procuring and human trafficking, or of either offence, the proceeds of the crime could be seized. The onus would be on the accused to prove that his big house and assets were the fruits of his labour and not the proceeds of crime. This represented reverse onus. It is an important measure. I hope that all my colleagues will support the adoption of this measure, which I will again introduce in this House in my bill on human trafficking.

[English]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, seeing that we have a couple of minutes left, I think it is incumbent upon us to explore the innovations put forward in the bill to the greatest extent possible.

I am particularly interested in the theme of the proceeds of crime that my colleague was just addressing. It is a big ball of wax if we start to reverse the onus on people. I am just wondering how, in the context of her initiatives, she dealt with the implied infringement of civil liberties associated with seizing the assets. How is the burden of proof measured? What is the test they would contemplate in proving that the goodies one plays with are not the proceeds of crime? We need to establish these things and it is worth—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The hon. member for Ahuntsic. A very brief response.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Speaker, I will try to be brief even though this is a rather complex issue.

Government Orders

I would like to tell the hon. member that this currently exists in the Criminal Code. When a person says that he works at McDonald's and that he has a large, million dollar home and that the house is in his name, it raises questions, particularly if that person was arrested for major drug trafficking; we know that the person is a member of the Hells Angels or another street gang. Generally—

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. It being 2:09 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion for second reading now before the House.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Is the Chief Government Whip rising on a point of order?

• (1410)

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you see the clock at 2:30.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is it agreed to see the clock at 2:30?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Accordingly, it being 2:30 p.m. the House stands adjourned until Monday, June 20 at 11 a.m. pursuant to an order made on Thursday, June 9 and to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:10 p.m.)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA



House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 146 • NUMBER 011 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, June 20, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 20, 2011

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1105)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SENIORS' POVERTY

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, ending seniors' poverty in Canada is fiscally feasible, and, therefore, the House calls on the government to take immediate steps to increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement sufficiently to achieve that goal.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin this morning's debate with a few illustrations of why this motion is so important.

We are talking about the people in our communities, seniors like Cliff Stafford from Oshawa who, after 50 years of hard work as a mechanic, has to rely on food banks to feed himself. That is wrong. He lost his wife nine years ago, he still has a mortgage to pay, and he is grappling with an illness. He watches every penny he spends, but the money just does not stretch far enough.

There is Tony from Vancouver who was a former real estate agent. After a divorce and two bouts with cancer, all of her RRSPs have been cashed in and she has no savings left. At 62, she cannot afford a place to live.

There is Frank, a senior in Sturgeon Falls, Ontario, whose bills for basic utilities have gone up by \$20 a month because of the government's HST. This may not seem like a lot of money, but it is when one is trying to make ends meet. It is cold up there and turning off the heat is not an option.

There is also Joey Jayne in Winnipeg who was forced into early retirement due to an injury at her workplace. She is now forced to use a food bank as her small pension and benefits are just not enough.

In Winnipeg, the number of seniors using food banks nearly doubled last year. Sadly, this is a trend right across the country. In Waterloo, one in four users of food banks are seniors.

The plight of seniors living in poverty is unnecessary and easily addressed with a targeted increase to the GIS. That is the reason why this motion is so very important. With a small investment, we can make a significant impact on the everyday lives of seniors. This is intelligent, practical and affordable. This targeted increase to the GIS would cost significantly less than the \$700 million that the government gave to the G20.

To give the House some perspective, the Senate of Canada costs Canadian taxpayers \$106 million a year. Since April 2006, the federal government has spent over \$125 million on hospitality expenses. The Government of Canada spent \$26 million in three months on advertising its economic action plan before the last election. In the 2009-10 fiscal year, the total federal advertising cost taxpayers \$136.3 million. From 2006-10, the government spent over \$6 million on Google word ads.

Perhaps the government would prefer not to make cuts to advertising or hospitality, but we could look to where the government is now losing revenue. Last year corporate tax cuts cost the government \$8 billion and \$6 billion this year. A tiny fraction of this amount would be enough to bring our seniors out of poverty.

The GIS, which is supposed to help seniors, actually forces many seniors, especially those who are single, into poverty. The amount of money they have to live on is not enough to make ends meet. If they try to earn more, their benefits are clawed back, which further condemns them to poverty. The motion before the House today would give those seniors enough money to bring them up to a reasonable standard of living without facing clawbacks of the benefits they depend on for quality of life.

The National Union of Public and General Employees outlines the critical problem with the small GIS increase in the most recent budget. NUPGE argues that the government's increase would provide only \$1.64 a day for single seniors and \$2.30 for couples. This amount would only go to those with less than \$2,000 in annual income, excluding moneys from OAS and GIS. Any income over \$2,000 and seniors would see their increase clawed back at the rate of 75%. It is shameful that we would expect anyone to try to scrape by on so little and then penalize them if they manage to make a little more money to buy food and other necessities.

Business of Supply

According to CARP, Ontario is home to 1.7 million people receiving OAS. Of that group, over 475,000 Ontarians receive GIS benefits.

Eligibility for GIS is based on a maximum income, other than OAS, of \$15,888 per year for an unattached person over 65 and \$20,976 for a married couple. Individuals living just above the income threshold are ineligible for GIS benefits. This is not a lot of money when one considers the cost of rent, prescription drugs, and all the other bills that have to be paid, particularly for unattached seniors. It is for those who do not have pension savings or an adequate income that this motion is designed to help.

The maximum benefits that one can receive from OAS and GIS combined is \$1,191. That is just over \$14,000 a year. This money will barely cover rent in most cities in this country and that is a travesty, especially since it is something that we can fix.

Canada is a rich and privileged country. We need to support our seniors because it is the ethical thing to do and practical in terms because our seniors support the economy and their families. We depend on seniors' volunteer work. We depend on their help with child care. We depend on them to participate in the economy. They can do none of this if they are struggling in poverty.

Today, we are talking about our parents and our grandparents, but our handling of their concerns will affect not just them but also our generation and that of our children.

Seniors represent one of the fastest growing populations in Canada today. The number of seniors in Canada is projected to increase from 4.2 million to 9.8 million between 2005 and 2036. With so many more seniors retiring in the years to come, we need to have a social safety net in place now to avoid dramatic increases in the rate of poverty in the future.

The concerns for the future are very real. Today, only 38.5% of Canadian workers have workplace pensions and nearly one-third have no retirement savings at all. More than 3.5 million Canadians are not saving enough in RRSPs for what used to be called their golden years, and 75% of workers are not even participating in a registered pension plan.

Clearly, the notion that retirement savings can be adequately accounted for through purchases of RRSPs does not work and urgent government action is needed.

It should further be noted that private retirement savings are concentrated in a small percentage of families. According to Statistics Canada, 25% of families hold 84% of these assets, while 3 out of 10 families have no private pensions at all.

Seniors have worked hard all their lives. They have played by the rules. They simply want access to the programs and services that their hard-earned tax dollars helped to build. Programs such as the GIS are essential to their full participation in Canadian society. They allow seniors to retire with the dignity and respect they deserve.

But when income supports are inadequate, there are terrible consequences. One of my constituents, Ruth, lives with her daughter now because she cannot afford to live on her own. Ruth's daughter has lost time from work to care for her mother. But when Ruth's daughter attempted to claim a caregiver amount on taxes to assist

with lost wages, she was denied because Ruth's income was \$1,057 over the yearly maximum allowable, even though Ruth's income leaves her below the poverty line.

There is also Judy Howe and her husband from Halifax who struggle to get by. Their rent is nearly \$1,000 per month, leaving them with very little for food. In the public housing for seniors, where they live, they battle mice and rarely have access to hot water or heat.

Every senior in Canada has the absolute right to income security. In a series of polls conducted by the Canadian Labour Congress in 2004, 73% of Canadians polled said that they worried about not having enough income to live after retirement. The number of people who worried about income security had increased by almost 20% from two years before.

Canadians are worried about the solvency of their private pensions, the adequacy of both CPP and public income support, and their ability to cope with what Statistics Canada confirms is a higher inflation rate for seniors and for the average Canadian. Those fears are well-founded.

● (1110)

For instance, in London, Ontario, McCormick, which later became known as Beta Brands, a food processing firm which had been part of manufacturing in our community for more than 100 years, was purchased in 2007 by a Florida investment firm. The company laid off the entire workforce of 275 workers. It closed the plant and denied the workers their vacation pay, severance pay, and denied them their pensions.

Many of the workers at Beta Brands had been there for 35 to 40 years. Some were married couples. When the plant closed, many of these workers were utterly destitute. Despite having worked all their lives, the employees of Beta Brands face poverty and a loss of quality of life in their senior years. While this motion will not give them back their pensions, it will ease the pressure on their monthly bills.

In total, more than a quarter million seniors live below the poverty line. Since the mid-1990s, the income of seniors has reached a ceiling and the gap between the revenues of seniors and those of other Canadians is now increasing. According to the government's own national advisory council on aging, between 1997 and 2003 the mean income of senior households increased by \$4,100 while the average income of other Canadian households increased by \$9,000.

The situation is even more pronounced for seniors living alone. A life of poverty is most prevalent among women, those widowed, separated or divorced, recent immigrants, tenants, those without private pension coverage, and not surprisingly those with low wages.

Senior women face harsh realities upon retirement. The poverty rate for senior women is almost double the poverty rate for senior men. In particular, unattached women remain very vulnerable. They make up 60% of seniors living below the poverty line. In 2003, according to a Government of Canada report, 154,000 unattached senior women lived in poverty.

How do our mothers and grandmothers end up living in poverty? There are many reasons. Women's unpaid work makes their risk of poverty higher and results in less access to private pensions. Older women tend to have lower incomes because they live longer, which leaves them at greater risk of using up their savings as time goes by. Immigrant women are particularly vulnerable. Many over the age of 65, who have lived in Canada for 10 years or less, are without any income at all. Senior women receive smaller pension incomes because of the wage difference between men and women. Most divorced women do not claim a portion of their former spouses' pension even though they are entitled to it. Many retirement plans do not compensate for absences to raise children or look after sick relatives and we know that these absences are generally taken by women.

The ratio of male-to-female earnings tells a story of persistent, systematic inequality between male and female incomes, whether from employment or pensions. Women are concentrated in low wage and part-time jobs where there is rarely a pension available at all.

Women who are able to work are still at a disadvantage. Women in this country work for pay at 75% of their potential working years, whereas men work for 94% of their potential working years. Consequently, women have less opportunity to save for their pension. More men than women save through RRSPs because men tend to make more money and they are able to put more money aside for their retirement.

I think that it is very important to emphasize that these senior women living in poverty did not end up there the day they retired. It was the poverty of their youth or the near poverty that prevented them from setting aside money for retirement. That is the real source and genesis of this problem.

Senior women, whose spouses pass away, face a reduction in their partners' private pension and CPP, a deduction of 40%. This is problematic as some women may not be able to afford to maintain their standard of living. Expenses for a single person are about 70% of the living expenses for a couple. This has the potential to drive women into poverty as many senior women depend on their spouses' pension for the couple's income.

● (1115)

Our senior women need access to pension dollars, whether they work outside the home or in the home raising a family. Our mothers, our grandmothers, our fathers, our grandfathers, they all deserve the right to live in dignity, the right not to live in poverty.

Another of my constituents, Maria, is turning 65 next month and is currently on a provincial disability support plan. Maria learned that her CPP entitlement would be a meagre \$22.49 per month and that she would be eligible for OAS in the amount of \$286.89 per month. Maria receives assistance for incontinence and diabetic supplies through the provincial disability program, of about \$500 per month, but she will not be eligible for the extra medical expenses through OAS. She is worried about how she will manage when she is on the Canada pension plan and no longer entitled to this extra provincial help. Maria thought that her monthly income would decline by about \$1,500 with the extra medical assistance and that her income would be \$309.38 a month to live on. No one told her

Business of Supply

about the GIS top-up and, as a result, Maria was experiencing profound anxiety regarding her financial difficulties to come.

Maria came to my constituency office in great distress, having been told there was no other help for her. I am lucky to have a wonderful and compassionate staff who went to work for Maria. My office was able to quickly determine that she was eligible for the GIS top-up, equalling \$902.08 monthly. With GIS, OAS and CPP, she will receive \$1,191.85 monthly, but she will still fall well below the \$1,500 that she was receiving on disability. Maria is expected to manage on less than \$15,000 a year, which is well below the poverty line.

This motion will go a long way in helping Maria to make ends meet.

Another woman, a 63-year-old from Waterloo, spends the majority of her disability pension on rent. This leaves her with a mere \$48 per month to live on. She is on a six-year waiting list to get into affordable housing.

Our Party, the New Democrats, have been fighting for the rights of seniors for many years. When the GIS was first introduced as a bill in the House, New Democrats were there speaking in support to eliminate the poverty of our seniors. I would like to quote New Democrat Grace MacInnes, who spoke in this very chamber on December 5, 1966, on behalf of the poor and in support of the GIS. Grace said:

When I think of the elderly people of this country, those who have built this country, have hewn its forests and tilled its fields, have made its homes and raised its children, have worked its mines and fished its shores, those elderly men and women both in my riding and in ridings across the country who have nothing to depend on except their community for which they have worked so long and so hard, people who believed and had faith in the minister's statement that something much better would be in store for them., I am reminded of a verse which puts the situation much more eloquently than I could put it:

Two things, says Kant, fill me with awe,
The starry heavens and the moral law
And yet a third, more awful and obscure,
The long, long patience of the plundered poor.

I feel, Mr. Chairman, that the elderly people of this country have certainly had the long, long patience. But this government has permitted them to be plundered of their heritage and their birthright, which surely is to finish out their days in this country in comfort, with modern living standards and in security. I appeal to the minister to cut out playing with words and to amend the legislation so that we may once again go back to an across-the-board old age pension in this country as of right. I ask the minister to undertake a study to fix an income level which we can truly call a guaranteed income for the elderly people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, we have come a long way since those days in improving pensions, but there is much more to do. Grace's words are as true today as they were in 1966.

We in the New Democratic Party will never stop making proposals for seniors. We did in the past and we will continue in the future. We will, again and again, move motions to protect seniors, because they are our parents and grandparents, the builders of this nation.

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• (1120)

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have recommended a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy and, of course, campaigned on increasing the GIS, as well.

I wonder if the member could comment on the recent research showing that reducing income inequality in a society, in a country, actually benefits all members of that society from reduced crime levels, improved health and in terms of a number of other quality of life metrics.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right that there is a profound benefit for every single member of our community from reducing poverty among all members of our community.

We do, indeed, see increased costs to society in regard to health care. If people cannot afford a decent home, cannot put good food on the table and are constantly in stress, spending all of their days trying to figure out how they are going to manage, how they are going to raise their kids or, in the case of seniors, how they are going to meet those bills, prescription drug bills, rent, transportation, then their health is impacted.

A lot of seniors end up in emergency rooms. In fact 30% of the beds in emergency rooms are occupied by seniors in distress.

We have seen statistics that the cost of poverty in this country is about \$30 billion a year. That \$30 billion comes out of our economy because we do not have the wherewithal to look after the people in need, our seniors and our children, the people who depend on us.

• (1125)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for London—Fanshawe for very ably outlining the dilemma and the dire circumstances actually facing many seniors in this country.

The member talked about the fact that in many of our cities and towns, seniors cannot afford rent. I know in my own riding that I have had seniors come to me and say that after living in their community for many years, they have had to move because they can no longer afford the rent in Duncan.

One of the things the member for London—Fanshawe touched on was the changing circumstances for many seniors. I know that in my riding and others we are seeing an increasing number of seniors raising their grandchildren. In Nanaimo—Cowichan, Joy and Carl are a couple of seniors who have had to take in their young grandchildren because of the changed life circumstances of their own children.

I wonder if the member could comment on the fact that not only have our seniors been working hard all their lives and hoping to retire with dignity and a comfortable existence, but now because of the economic times many of them are having to take in and raise their grandchildren. That is simply not something most of us would expect to do. I wonder if the member could comment on that.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question because it is a very serious reality.

In the province of Ontario, we hear more and more about seniors who are indeed raising grandchildren, because their own children are

without work, having experienced economic or marital difficulties of some kind. The end result is that these seniors are indeed looking after the next generation, but without any supports.

There are no provincial benefits. The federal government does not have any programs in place to support and help these seniors. We need affordable housing. We need universal child care. We need all kinds of systems in place to help people manage.

Unfortunately, the current government has seen fit to deny Canadians all of these important support systems. That puts everyone, including seniors, in jeopardy.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the member that the Bloc Québécois will support her motion. I would be very surprised if any member in this House did not support this motion for seniors.

Does she believe that the government has its priorities right when, for example, the purchase of fighter jets will cost the government \$35 billion and a one-point GST cut means the government loses \$12 billion to \$13 billion?

If members of the Conservative government vote in favour of this motion today, does the member believe that the government will finally make poverty a priority and take action to bring seniors out of poverty, specifically by giving them easy access to the guaranteed income supplement to bring them above the poverty line, with \$110 per month, instead of the \$50 included in the budget?

[English]

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, it would not surprise anyone in the least to hear me say that the current government's priorities are askew. They have nothing to do with the reality of the people the government is supposed to serve.

If we look at budget 2011, which was just passed, less than half of what is needed to lift all seniors out of poverty was allocated in the budget. Yet as the member pointed out, \$35 billion was made available for fighter jets.

Here it is interesting to note that the government is quite prepared to support the aerospace industry in the United States but not in Canada. In addition, there are concerns that by the time the jets are delivered, they will be obsolete. They are designed for air-to-air combat, which is something Canada is not likely to do. There are suspicions that the jets are going to be used strictly on standby for the Americans, when they decide to bomb a country or take out their frustrations with regard to another country and launch a war.

We have seen tax cuts for profitable corporations to the tune of \$60 billion. That is \$60,000 million. If we can afford to give the fat-cat corporations this largesse, surely we can afford to raise our parents and grandparents out of poverty.

• (1130)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in this important debate, I would be interested to know if the hon. member and her caucus have been considering the advantages of a nationwide guaranteed annual income or guaranteed livable income that would apply to all Canadians without a needs test.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, that is a thoughtful question. Of course, a guaranteed annual income is something that has come up over the decades quite consistently with New Democrats and, I suspect, with others. When one considers the advantages of making sure there is adequate income, the advantages are profound.

I go back to the first question with regard to ensuring the health and welfare of members of our community. People simply cannot manage. They cannot raise kids, look for work, or be contributors to the society and economy that are depending on them if they are constantly worried about income.

As I pointed out, the cost of poverty in this country is reckoned to be about \$30 billion. We cannot afford that; we can only afford to look after people.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my hon. colleague a question regarding an issue that is prevalent across rural parts of this country, certainly in my area, the utility bills that impoverished people, especially seniors, have to pay.

There is one charity organization in Toronto called Share the Warmth whose whole point is to produce electricity credits for those who are impoverished and vulnerable, because one of the last things that happens when their utilities are cut off is that they become officially homeless. A lot of seniors in my area fall victim to that simply because they have homes they have owned for many years and on which they pay no mortgages, but which are large, inefficient and very expensive to heat.

I was wondering if my hon. colleague could comment on that and how we can make certain strategic investments to help seniors with utilities.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, yes, the cost of utilities is driving seniors out of their homes and that is why New Democrats proposed removing the HST from the cost of heating and utilities. When they fall behind in paying their utilities, the cost to have their utilities reconnected is horrific and simply beyond their means.

In the last budget the government reintroduced the retrofit program, but only for one year. It is not enough. There has to be some intelligent long-term planning in terms of how we address the needs of our communities, and increasing the GIS would be among them.

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for London—Fanshawe on her recent re-election to the House of Commons.

Since this is my first speech since the election and the start of the new Parliament, I will take a moment to thank a few people.

First, I thank the Prime Minister for appointing me as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour. I truly appreciate being entrusted with this responsibility. It will be a pleasure and a privilege to work with these ministers.

I thank my family for their ongoing love and support, especially during the election campaign, my father, Kit Leitch, my siblings,

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Melanie and Michael, and our extended family who provided me with so much overwhelming support.

I also thank every person who worked on my campaign team, especially Ted Rowe, John Hethrington, Charlie Tatham, Sidney Stevenson, Ernie Purkis and Jacqui Noble. Their dedication and support will never be forgotten.

Last, but not least, I thank the people of Simcoe—Grey who put their trust in me to represent them in Ottawa.

The motion by the hon. member for London—Fanshawe calls on the government to take immediate action to increase the guaranteed income supplement, which is exactly what we have done and which is why we will be supporting this motion today.

• (1135)

[Translation]

In the Speech from the Throne, we announced that the low tax plan that our government is committed to implement will include:

[English]

A permanent increase in the guaranteed income supplement for some 680,000 of the most vulnerable seniors.

In budget 2011, we have clearly demonstrated that we are determined to contribute to the security of seniors who have worked all their lives to build a better Canada and to be able to retire with dignity. It should come as no surprise to members opposite as this Conservative government announced we would do this in the first budget 2011.

On the campaign trail, the Prime Minister said:

Although Canada has a strong system of support for retired seniors, there are still too many Canadian seniors who experience financial difficulties. A re-elected Conservative Government will ensure that we provide assistance to those seniors most in need, in recognition of the contributions they have made to our country.

That is a promise kept.

In the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, we will enhance the guaranteed income supplement for seniors who depend almost exclusively on old age security and the supplement. As of July 2011, eligible seniors will receive up to \$600 a year in extra benefits in the case of seniors living alone, or up to \$840 in the case of couples.

[Translation]

This increase will help the most vulnerable seniors, especially widows and single women with low incomes, to make ends meet.

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We are talking about the greatest increase in the GIS for the lowest income seniors in 25 years. That is not nothing. Let me also point out that, because of the measures we adopted soon after we took power in 2006, seniors and pensioners have now benefited from almost \$1 billion annually in increases in the GIS and will benefit from targeted tax relief of \$2.3 billion in 2011-12.

What are these tax breaks? First, we raised the age credit by \$1,000 in 2006 and by another \$1,000 in 2009. Second, we doubled the maximum amount of pension revenue that is eligible for a pension tax credit, which has gone up to \$2,000. Third, we have allowed pension splitting. Finally, we have raised the age limit for converting pensions and registered retirement savings plans from 69 to 71.

As a result of our tax relief measures, 85,000 seniors have been removed from the tax roles entirely. In 2011, a single senior will earn at least \$19,064 and a senior couple will earn at least \$38,128 before paying any federal income tax.

It is clear that an important dimension of economic well-being for the senior population is the income at their disposal relative to the working population. A good income security system contributes to maintaining the standard of living of seniors and minimizes the risk of poverty. This year almost \$70 billion will be paid out to Canadians through Canada's public pension system, which includes old age security and the Canadian pension plan.

The guaranteed income supplement, or GIS, is part of the old age security program. For this program alone, more than 1.6 million seniors received more than \$7.7 billion in 2009-10. This is in addition to the \$26.4 billion provided to 4.6 million OAS pensioners. It provides extra support to seniors with little or no income and has been instrumental in reducing poverty among seniors in Canada. That is why we have enhanced the GIS benefit by 7%, over and above the cost of living, since 2006.

The numbers speak for themselves. Canada has one of the lowest rates of senior poverty among the countries in the OECD. It is lower than that of Denmark, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States. We are proud that the rate of low income among seniors has steadily decreased from a high of 21.3% in 1980 to less than 6% today. Canadians can take pride in this notable achievement. We have also changed the rules so recipients can earn up to \$3,500 without affecting the benefit amounts.

Given that our economy is so fragile, in spite of the recovery, we must limit our spending while keeping tax levels low. In addition, given the aging population and other demographic challenges, there will be significant pressures placed on Canada's pension system in the coming years. We need to be fiscally responsible now to ensure support remains available for those poor most in need.

● (1140)

[Translation]

The \$300 million a year increase in the guaranteed income supplement allows us to focus our efforts on those seniors who need it most.

[English]

This is a balanced approach. It allows us to help the most vulnerable among us while fostering efforts to boost growth and create jobs.

However, what we have not heard from the opposition is a concrete plan. We see a general concept in this motion, which we will support and believe we have addressed this in the budget, but we do not see a strategy or a costed proposal. Depending on the measure of poverty that is referred to, the NDP may be talking about a \$2 billion a year increase in government costs. In an era of fiscal restraint, one is left wondering how we might fund such a program.

It raises a question as to whether we would be perpetually required to increase funding as we chase a relative measure such as the low income cutoff. Using LICO, which relies on an average, requires perfect equality for all income brackets to end poverty.

While we support this motion and we believe we have addressed this issue in the budget, we would like some clarification from the members across on what they are actually using to define poverty, because, as I noted earlier, Canada has one of the lowest instances of senior poverty in the world.

[Translation]

Everyone, including our government, is concerned about the financial security of our seniors.

[English]

However, to be effective, we need to target our interventions. It is in this spirit that we brought in the largest increase in the guaranteed income supplement for the lowest of income seniors in 25 years to help those seniors who need it the most.

For the most part, the majority of individuals who will receive the top up are women, women who may never have worked outside the home long enough to build a retirement pension in their own name or contribute significantly to the Canada pension plan, women who have had informal precarious jobs without any social benefits, and women who reach the age of retirement without sufficient private retirement pension benefits even though they have made a huge and valuable contribution to their family, their community and to our society.

We are proud of what we are doing to ensure the financial security of our seniors. Efforts over the past few years to reduce poverty among seniors have borne fruit and the statistics speak for themselves.

[Translation]

We are indebted to the previous generations who built this great country.

[English]

We owe it to our seniors to ensure they have a high quality of life and that they can retire in dignity.

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Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her maiden speech. It has been both interesting and fascinating to hear words and more words. All the gestures that we have heard from the government in the past are nothing more than gestures because it still has left a quarter of a million seniors in poverty.

If the member wants to know where the money will come from, I have a simple solution. If we look at the tax cuts that the government is giving, the largesse that I spoke of, we can easily find the money: \$60 billion in tax cuts to profitable corporations; and \$20 billion in terms of what has been given to the banks over the years.

All we are talking about is \$700 million. It is a lot of money but it is about the cost of a G8 photo op. We can afford it. We cannot afford to allow our seniors to be impoverished.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, again I ask about the NDP proposal and how it would lift seniors out of poverty. The NDP proposal is unrealistic. It would actually cost \$2 billion annually, not \$700 million as stated by the NDP. In our current fiscal environment this is not realistic.

The top up of the GIS of more than \$300 million annually is the largest increase for the lowest income seniors in a quarter century. This will reduce the depth of poverty for seniors living in poverty by over \$500 annually.

I would ask the member opposite to give us a specific costing plan so that we can understand how much this would cost Canadian taxpayers.

• (1145)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from my understanding, and I think I have this correct, the government will support the motion, which reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, ending seniors' poverty in Canada is fiscally feasible, and, therefore, the House calls on the government to take immediate steps to increase the guaranteed income supplement sufficiently to achieve that goal.

If I am not mistaken, the vast majority of literature that exists on ending the two pillars of the OAS and the GIS calls for that increase to be in excess of \$700 million. What we are seeing here is a \$300 million investment by the government, which is actually less than half. I am not quite sure if the government can really support this unless something more is coming, which would be appreciated.

I am wondering if the parliamentary secretary could tell the House what she, heard on the campaign. Is there more to come given the wording of this motion?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to the well-being of low income seniors and we have taken several steps.

The government has increased the GIS by more than \$1 billion per year over the last number of sessions. In 2006, we increased the GIS by \$18 per month for single seniors and \$29 per month for couples. In 2007, we increased it again by the same amount, an increase of approximately \$700 million annually. Now, in 2011, we have introduced a GIS top up for those most in need, and I emphasize that, of \$50 for single recipients and \$35 for each member of a couple. In

addition, we have increased GIS earnings exemptions from \$500 to \$3,500 before paying tax.

We have taken numerous other initiatives, whether that be income splitting for seniors on their pension incomes, or the tax free savings accounts. This government has moved forward on numerous other initiatives in order to support those people who built our country.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by the hon. parliamentary secretary. She talked a lot about how we would pay for this and what would be the plan.

As my colleague, the member for London—Fanshawe, explained, we put forward a very clear strategy on how to increase the GIS, and that is by spending \$700 million. As has been said, it is a lot of money, but it is clearly something that is within the government's capacity. That would lift all seniors now living in poverty out of poverty.

We also talked considerably in the election, and prior to the election, about strengthening and expanding the Canada pension plan. That would enable seniors and other Canadians to realize not only a pension that would provide them with some standard of living, but one that would be affordable. It was a phased in strategy that both employees and employers would be able to contribute to and that would be affordable.

My question for the hon. parliamentary secretary is this. We have provided a lot of solutions. Why does the government continue to choose to pour billions of dollars into the coffers of corporate executives rather than ensure that our seniors can eat and pay their rent?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, again, this government has done a significant amount for those seniors who have helped build our country. Whether it be pension income splitting, or an increase in the GIS or the increase in the exemption from \$500 to \$3,500, the government has shown that it supports seniors and especially low income seniors.

In addition to that, we would like to see the true costing of the NDP plan. What are the details for the \$700 million plan? We know that is unrealistic and could cost Canadians as much as \$2 billion annually. In our current fiscal environment this is truly not realistic.

The top-up for the GIS is more than \$300 million annually. It is the largest increase for our lowest income seniors in a quarter century. Will the members opposite support this?

Will the NDP please tell us the costing of its plan? We believe it is \$2 billion.

• (1150)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague on the government side.

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In my riding, seniors who have a hard time making ends meet are asking me why the government is giving money to big corporations and to the heads of the major banks and oil companies. They are asking me why these companies are receiving tax credits when they are able to manage.

Could my colleague tell me why these people are getting preferential treatment over our seniors who are living in poverty?

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned already, the government has been focused on supporting Canadian seniors, particularly low income seniors.

The additional GIS top-up is over \$300 million annually and will benefit over 680,000 of our lowest income seniors. It is the most significant increase in a quarter century. When combined with the 2006 and 2007 GIS increases, the government has provided over a billion dollars per year in annual benefits to GIS recipients over and above the regular index.

The GIS top-up was designed to target the lowest income seniors who are the most in need. This includes approximately 460,000 women, many of whom have made a valuable contribution to their families, their communities and Canadian society.

Targeted benefits to the lowest income seniors allow resources to be used effectively. In the current fiscal environment, we believe this is fiscally responsible.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to bring it back to real people, the seniors who need the money.

As I am sure all members have heard, seniors are not getting enough money to have a disposable income that enables them to buy the necessary drugs and medications, or to take their grandchildren out for a meal.

Does the member believe the government is giving enough for seniors to suffice over the next couple of years, or does she anticipate more will coming in the next year or two over and above what the government is currently committed to doing?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, these seniors have built our country.

In addition to the GIS top-up that we have talked about, this government has made significant investments in seniors: \$10 million to increase the funding to the new horizons seniors program; \$50 million as a targeted initiative for older workers; and a pooled registered pension plan is a commitment on which the provinces and territories have been working together.

This government is committed to seniors. We have shown that in the past and we have shown it in budget 2011.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on being elected to this new Parliament.

Today we are looking at an NDP motion from our colleague from London—Fanshawe, calling for an end to poverty among the seniors, something we have talked about for some time. The member says that the government should use the guaranteed income supplement to accomplish that goal.

However, seniors collecting the GIS are not the only seniors facing challenges. This is the problem with the NDP. Focusing just on the GIS is insufficient.

We need to start to look at the real issues of poverty, pension income replacement and quality of life for all seniors in a much more holistic way. Trying to pass off a one-size-fits-all solution is irresponsible, reckless and short-sighted.

As the critic for seniors, pensions and women's issues, I will vote for this motion. I would expect all of us in the House would and should vote for it, but it is very limited when it comes to its real scope.

The Liberal Party is prepared to work, as we have before, to support the goal of ending poverty. I hope it is a goal that all of us in the House will work toward.

In our most recent campaign, the Liberals made senior issues central to our platform. The Liberals were proposing, as was the NDP, to increase the GIS by \$700 million a year. If we truly want to eliminate all of those seniors who live below the poverty, there is only one way to do it, and that is by increasing the GIS by that amount of money.

Let us look at the corporate tax cuts. Simply eliminate one corporate tax cut of \$1 billion and there would be enough to do a bit more than that.

The Liberal plan would benefit all 1.6 million seniors who are living below the poverty line, not half of them now and half of them in the next budget. The lowest-income seniors would have had an extra benefit of \$650 a year.

I am not here just to poke holes in the NDP proposal. I am here to put forward constructive ideas, which is what I hope all of us will do in the House. The NDP plan is limited and overly simplistic, but the end result is very much worth supporting. Maybe we can all agree, following the debate today, on what the end goal will be.

The Conservative budget unveiled earlier this month includes a \$300 million bump to the GIS. That increase will be accessible to some 680,000 of the poorest seniors in Canada. Again, it is for only those who qualify, only those who are eligible, not all of those seniors living below the poverty line. In fact, what it is actually doing is giving those seniors enough for probably a cup or two of coffee a day.

This is what the Conservative plan does not do. It does not address the fact that women endure higher levels of poverty than men. It does not address the fact that 75% of Canadians do not have access to adequate pension savings, which is the core of the problem about which we are talking.

It does not address issues such as seniors' transportation or access to affordable medications. Nor does it address poverty faced by certain marginalized communities, such as rural, northern or Aboriginal Canadians.

What would I do differently if I had the opportunity to put something forward? Let me talk about some of the things I have done as the seniors critic in the last two years.

Last October I released a comprehensive white paper, which examined the issue of pension reform in a holistic manner. It is available on my web site and I would be glad to share with anyone. I shared it with the government at the time I introduced it.

The paper contained 28 recommendations, covering everything from the cost of living increases and the establishment of a real poverty line to enhance the CPP and to make the Income Tax Act more senior-friendly.

I introduced the pension income bill of rights, which I have re-introduced in this Parliament. That bill would have given every person a chance to accumulate retirement income in a plan, which would be there in the long term for Canadians. It promoted good administration of retirement plans, to ensure that members of retirement income plans would regularly receive good, plain English information that they needed to understand their plan. However, to set out in law the goals to which we aspire legislatively as they relate to retirement income, a pension income bill of rights would protect pensions and protect pensioners.

Last week I put 15 motions on notice, aimed at dealing with seniors poverty in a real and substantive way. These motions build upon the ideas contained in that very same white paper.

● (1155)

One of those motions was to establish a national program for poverty prevention and independent living to provide support to Canadians over the age of 65 who had expressed a strong desire to remain in their homes regardless of advancing years or faltering health. Many of us, through the campaign, met seniors who were doing everything possible to remain in their home and were looking for assistance, whether that meant home care support, friendly visiting, or somebody checking in on them every couple of days to ensure they were well and had what they needed.

Another motion calls on the government to implement a national and voluntary supplementary Canada pension plan designed to provide enhanced retirement income savings opportunities and income support for Canadian seniors. This would allow people to contribute extra to a supplementary Canada pension plan and would help them save for their future. There is no vehicle for Canadians other than an RRSP. The current government is talking about a PRPP that would make banks and insurance companies rich, but would do little to help people save for their retirement.

Another motion calls on the government to launch an immediate review of the manner in which cost of living is calculated for the purposes of old age security pension, the guaranteed income supplement to the Canada pension plan and the Quebec pension plan.

Another motion is that the government should revise the existing Canada pension plan so as to remove any systemic inequities.

That talks about the failings of the current government and some of the things it could be doing. However, there are issues when it comes to the NDP motion and its failings.

Unfortunately, as much as I applaud today's motion, it is still nothing more than a long stream of motions put forward that fail to seriously address the problems. It is another list of sound bites, same

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kind of rhetoric, but it does not talk about what we really need to do to move forward. It sounds good, but it misses the mark by reducing a complex national program to a sound bite.

I propose we remove the politics in favour of genuine problem solving. I know the member for London—Fanshawe is very much committed to finding solutions to poverty especially among seniors and throughout the country.

As to some of the failings of the Conservative government, two years ago the minister stated in the House at question period that pension reform had no place in Ottawa. He said that the matter was provincial. The government has reluctantly retracted that stand due to massive public pressure and now admits it does have a role when it comes to pensions. However, the government has still not put forward any real solution to the pension crisis that the country faces. We know that 75% of Canadians do not have a pension plan and do not have the opportunity to save.

The government talks about Bill C-3, which it has the courage to call, "Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act". For the \$300 million to go to poor seniors in Canada, the government calls it, "supporting vulnerable seniors". If it really wanted to take credit for that, it would have put \$1.6 billion in there and eliminated the poverty level.

That bill helps seniors by providing \$20 million to help the Canadian Youth Business Foundation. I am not quite sure how that would help seniors.

Also, Bill C-3 would help seniors by strengthening the government's oversight of the mortgage insurance industry. I am not sure how that helps seniors either.

As well, it would help seniors by reducing the in-study interest rate for part-time students to zero, bringing them in line with full-time students. How is that strengthening vulnerable seniors? I do not think it does.

Let us talk about the way ahead, the way we want to go, the way we would hope all of us would work toward to making a change. We need to change our national priorities.

In 2010 the government spent more than \$1 billion on things such as fake lakes, snacks, hand lotion and glow sticks at the G8 and G20 summits. That is more than \$1 billion and yet all it has for seniors living below the poverty line is \$300 million. There is clearly a problem. It does not have the same priorities that a lot of us have.

● (1200)

At the same time, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons tells us that 200,000 seniors still live in poverty. That same \$1 billion used for fake lakes, snacks and hand lotion could have been used for seniors. Increasing their income by \$5,000 would give them free groceries for a year. This must change.

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In the way ahead, the government says it wants to stop elder abuse. That is a very important issue and something we need to take a stronger stand on. However, on page 179 of the 2011-12 estimates, the government committed to slash the funding to non-profit organizations that are working to reduce the incidence of elder abuse and fraud. How can the minister stand and say he is going to reduce elder abuse and then turn around and cut the money that supposed to do that? It is the doublespeak that we continually hear. I could other words than "doublespeak", but I will not in respect to the Speaker and the House.

That is right, despite the promises of help to prevent elder abuse, the government cut it by 44%. Elder abuse is a heinous crime that can and must be stopped. Again, it is all about priorities. Sound bites will not reduce poverty in our country, end elder abuse or alter the government's priority on pension security coverage inadequacy.

The white paper that I put forward in the Liberal plan is comprehensive, targeted and affordable. I would like to invite the government to start taking its responsibility for moral leadership more seriously.

We talked today about what the way ahead is and where we are going. It is the beginning of the 41st Parliament. I believe the issue of seniors for the first time in the last election, thanks clearly to the opposition and a variety of organizations, made it very clear that seniors have to be looked at seriously, treated with a level of respect and given the hand up that they need in so many ways.

I heard about housing throughout the campaign. Some people want to stay in their homes and want the support to be able to do it. For others it was a question of moving into apartments better suited to their needs, but there was nowhere to go. For the aging population, there is a need for more nursing homes. There is a whole segment of issues that need to be addressed in a much more mutual way, along with the provinces of this country.

The Liberal Party of Canada introduced old age security. The Liberal Party of Canada introduced the guaranteed income supplement. The Liberal Party of Canada also introduced the Canada pension plan and in the future hopefully will introduce the supplementary Canada pension plan. Clearly, Liberals have shown their commitment to not only ending poverty but ensuring that Canadians can retire with dignity and a quality of life. It is an objective of the Liberal Party and one that it will continue to fight for.

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak today. I again applaud my colleague from London—Fanshawe for bringing the issue forward today. I hope that together all of us in the House can move this issue forward and find a way on a national level to truly help our seniors, to ensure that they have the quality of life they very much yearn for and do not have to eat macaroni and cheese twice a week or be unable to fill prescriptions. We are very focused on the poorest of the poor at this particular time.

• (1205)

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would point out that it might be prudent for my hon. colleague to read the NDP platform from the last election because pensions and seniors were the focus of it. New Democrats spent a great deal of time analyzing the situation with seniors and proposed some very

important things, like better long-term care, home care, affordable housing and CPP reform. There needs to be CPP reform in the long term, but for now we need an immediate GIS increase because the reality is that a quarter of a million seniors live below the poverty line.

I would ask the member for her opinion on income splitting of pensions. One of the things the government ballyhoos is pension splitting. The problem is while it sounds very good on the surface, for seniors who are single, mostly women, income splitting is no solution at all. Once again, the government has come up with half measures like its paltry \$300 million, when what is needed is \$700 million, and income splitting that does not help seniors who are single.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, clearly, the government's focus is on the seniors who are doing very well. Income splitting helps a lot of people. So be it. Let that happen. Let that continue.

However, there are all those seniors who do not benefit from income splitting. Sometimes we think that in order to get one thing we have to give up on a whole lot of others things.

Given the fact that are \$6 billion in tax cuts in this current budget, why is it we have to take from the poor, frankly, to give to the rich? I would like to live in a country that cares about everybody. Because when people are strong and people have money in their pockets they can buy medication, they can eat properly, they can have a good quality of life. We do not have to take from one to give to the other.

When we talk about income splitting, there are other benefits to that, clearly, and I do not want to take it away from people. I think that we can redirect the money that was going into corporate tax cuts and fighter jets to the people of Canada and to ensure that people have the quality of life that we would like to see them have. They contributed and worked for many years and after all they have done, they should not have to be sitting on the edge worrying about how are they going to be able to buy their medications when they need them.

• (1210)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by my colleague. I know that she has consistently been very passionate about our seniors with regard to ensuring that they have economic means. In fact, it is one of the reasons why I had a petition with regard to the guaranteed annual income. It was a rather simple petition. It consisted of handwritten pages that one constituent brought forward to share with me in terms of going out and getting other people to sign it.

I wonder if my colleague could provide some sort of comment in terms of feedback from her constituents on the issue of not having enough money in order to meet their needs. I have found it fairly commonplace, especially over the last six or seven months, that seniors feel this an issue of utmost importance for them and feel the government is not doing enough.

To what degree is she hearing that at the doors, given that we just went through an election, in terms of it being a priority issue?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Winnipeg North on winning the election. I know he had a really tough battle. It was his second election. I was watching most carefully. He is an extremely competent man and I am very glad that he was re-elected. He certainly fights very hard for his riding as well for all Canadians. He is a real asset to us here in the Liberal Party.

In the last election, knocking on doors we have all heard seniors' issues rising to the top of the priority list. Finally after many years of a lot of talking, we now have an opportunity to show more action.

I recall sitting down and talking to two very frail people in their home. They had a bit of home care, a bit of Meals on Wheels, but it was such a struggle for them after they paid property taxes, hydro and so on to maintain their home. It was sad to listen to them. This is Canada. What do we do to increase their quality of life? It means there are many issues. It means a concentrated effort from a national perspective. Surely this is an issue that we all can focus on and move forward to eliminate poverty in Canada.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the position of the member opposite, who is the member lateral to me now on senior care. I really do appreciate her ideas that removing politics and looking for solutions is a great idea to move forward.

However, I did hear her mention sound bites not being the mechanism to solve the problem but did not miss a number of sound bites that were injected into her speech as she went on to criticize the plans of both the opposition and the government.

If her concern for seniors is so genuine, why in the past have the Liberals voted against pension income splitting, voted against increasing age credits, voted against raising GIS exemptions from \$500 to \$3,500 and voted against additional money for the new horizons program, including funding to raise awareness for financial abuse of seniors?

I would appreciate it if she could answer that and acknowledge that there are more plans than the Liberal plan that are beneficial.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Clearly, Mr. Speaker, it is because there is no plan. It is a piecemeal approach to a little bit here and a little bit there, whatever will satisfy the voters enough to get their votes and drag them into a process of believing they will get something they will not get.

When the member for London—Fanshawe and ourselves talk about a national plan, we are talking about a national plan, not a piecemeal plan.

As I said before, it was the Liberals who introduced the guaranteed income supplement. It was the Liberals who introduced the old age security and it was the Liberals who introduced the Canada pension plan. If it were not for the Liberals, we would not

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even have those plans. Thank God for the Liberals and that we have those plans, but much more is needed.

My comments today are, let us try to do that in a concentrated effort. We have four and a half years. We can work together with the government and put politics aside so that at the end of the day we could at least be proud of the work we would have accomplished on the issue of seniors.

The other point is that we would not be dealing with this issue if we had better vehicles to put money away. When women in particular stay home to take care of their children and raise their families, they do not have an opportunity, which is the reason we have so many women who are living in poverty. They took the time off to have children and they were not able to contribute into a plan, even if they had a few dollars.

• (1215)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it really interesting that the member mentioned it was her party that actually put pensions in place. I need to refer her to history, because retirement security has long been a priority for New Democrats. In fact, the first pension legislation in the country was moved forward by one of our party's forerunners, which was the Independent Labour Party, in 1927. It was passed due to the ILP holding the balance of power with the minority King government. I just wanted to indicate that.

The other thing I want to mention is that the Liberal Party members keep going on about what they have done and how they have put pensions at the forefront.

I ask the member, why is it that when the Liberals were in government, they had the largest surplus and they did not increase pensions for seniors?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the member not try to rewrite history. It was Liberal prime ministers who introduced all of those programs, and when we were in government, we clearly increased GIS every step of the way and every other program that we had.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by saying that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Beaches—East York.

I am pleased to rise today to deliver my first speech in the House. As many others have done, I would like to take the opportunity to offer my thanks to those who were so helpful to and supportive of me, including my family, of course. Some of my family members even campaigned for me outside my riding. They were behind me 100%. They believed in change and, this year, they did not give in to the feeling that their vote would not change much. The same party had represented Pierrefonds—Dollard for a very long time. This year, the people believed and rightly so, because this time, each vote made a difference in Pierrefonds—Dollard.

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I want to thank all of the community groups and organizations that I visited. Collège Gérard-Godin disproved the myth that youth are not involved in politics. I had lively discussions with people of all ages from the various cultural groups in the riding. I want to thank all those who had lively discussions with their friends and family about politics. Everyone in Quebec agrees that it was an exciting campaign. It is always nice to see people getting involved.

Finally, I would like to thank the people of Pierrefonds—Dollard for the trust they placed in me, in the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth and in the NDP team. I want to thank them for their trust, of course, but I also want to thank them for being a source of inspiration for me.

Thank you to Véro, a mother who is waiting for her youngest to be in grade two before she returns to work. In the meantime, as a single mother, she does an impressive and thorough job of budgeting. She is wondering if she should go back to school to try and get her high school diploma.

Thank you to André, the young 72-year-old man who runs a seniors' social group. He puts all his energy into that group. He told me, among other things, that he was happy to still be living in his own home and to be mobile enough to be active in his community. Although he tries to think about it as little as possible, he is afraid of the day when he will be very dependent on our health care system.

Thank you to Samina, who looks after her sick mother and who has been hoping for many years that a family member will be able to join her in Pierrefonds to help her support her family. Thank you to all those who shared their stories with me and told me about their concerns and their priorities. They will motivate me every day to come to this place and speak on their behalf.

People of Pierrefonds, Île-Bizard, Dollard-des-Ormeaux and Roxboro, you can rest assured that you will not be disappointed. I will work hard to carry out the mandate that you gave me on May 2, and I will be your voice here in Ottawa.

I will start today by asking the government to do more to get seniors out of poverty. This year, in February 2011, the government sat down with the National Seniors Council to listen to what seniors had to say about the issues that are most important to them. The government said it would be a good way to work with people from the community to find solutions to the concerns and needs of seniors. However, the measures announced in the budget are far from satisfactory. On the one hand, the government is putting on a good show to bolster its image and make it look as though it cares about our seniors; on the other hand, the proposed measures indicate that the government is not truly interested in putting forward tangible measures to improve the well-being of seniors. The National Seniors Council has reason to feel betrayed, manipulated and insulted.

The recommendations made by the National Seniors Council are clear. After consulting the public and conducting a number of studies, it decided to propose to the government five areas for action that could significantly help low-income seniors.

● (1220)

First, and I am citing the council here, it proposes to address the impact of the cost of living and—more specifically—the cost of energy and food, on low-income seniors; provide more accessible

and affordable housing; ensure that more seniors maintain their independence; and ensure that low-income seniors have all the necessary access to needed health services and supplies without a negative impact on their income.

In short, these areas touch on issues that are important to the NDP.

One thing we proposed throughout our campaign was to reduce the cost of heating. We advocated for home care and the building of multi-generational homes. We spoke about increasing accessible and affordable housing. These are the issues we are defending.

Unfortunately, not all the parties are defending these issues. The government plans to invest \$300 million to enhance seniors' income. Taken out of context—and I am thinking here of my friends Véro, André and Samina—this may certainly seem like a huge amount. The government is well aware of this fact and is taking advantage of it. The government is bragging about this measure as though it were a generous gift. However, appearances can be deceiving and what the government is promising is actually far from generous.

Let us look at this \$300 million from another perspective. Approximately one-third of seniors who are living in poverty would be eligible for this additional assistance. That means that two-thirds of people age 65 and over who are living in poverty would not receive any help. I do not know if you talked to people as I did during my campaign, but I often heard them asking how this assistance would change their everyday lives. I met with people who were disillusioned by politics because they thought that, no matter who they voted for, it would not have any effect on their actual problems and their everyday lives. By implementing this measure, the government is telling those people that they were right and that, if they are seniors living in poverty, they may in fact not see any change in their income.

There is another way of looking at this \$300 million. The maximum amount a person can receive—and we are talking here about seniors who are the hardest hit by poverty—is approximately \$70 a month, which is less than \$2 per day for seniors in the deepest poverty.

Is anyone reassured knowing that these seniors will have an extra \$2 a day? Personally, I am not. How can the government be proud of this measure? I have to wonder who among the Conservatives would be willing to go and visit any seniors living in poverty and tell them what they will be getting.

I once worked in a community-based organization that advocates to help people living in poverty improve their quality of life. So if anyone is brave enough to do such a thing today, they can come and see me and I will give them some telephone numbers. I can arrange meetings so they can tell these seniors what the government is going to do for them. I would not feel good telling them about all this.

According to the NDP's calculations, we need to invest about \$700 million a year to significantly reduce poverty among seniors. Once again, this amount might sound huge, but we must think of the millions of dollars given to the most profitable corporations and to banks. The government justifies its decision to limit spending by saying it wants to balance the budget, but let me remind the House that this would not involve any additional spending, but rather making different choices and investing money for people, where it can really make a difference.

Basically, what we are proposing here today would allow us to significantly reduce poverty among seniors.

I hope our proposal will resonate with everyone here today.

• (1225)

[English]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-sor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my hon. colleague to the House of Commons. That was probably one of the finest speeches I have heard since I have been here. I want to congratulate her because it was very heartfelt. She certainly has politics in her grasp because she told us stories about how these policies affect people. That is how we debate in the House, at least that is the way I like to debate.

She also has a nice riding. I lived there in 1995 and I was able to vote in the Quebec referendum. I voted no, for the record.

My colleague brought up a good point about the utilities measures and heating costs. She also brought up home care, which is a major issue in my particular area much like hers when it comes to impoverished seniors.

Lately, we have been besieged with requests for help because of catastrophic drug coverage. There is very little in the way of drug coverage right now. Drug costs are much higher. Perhaps my colleague would like to tell us some stories involving her riding as to just how big health is, especially when it comes to catastrophic drug coverage.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

In Pierrefonds—Dollard, we know what it is like to deal with shortcomings in health care. We do not have any major hospitals. We have many health care and social services centres instead and they all have incredibly long lineups. When the hon. member was talking about the high cost of drugs, I immediately thought of the mother who has to fight to get her medication after learning she has cancer while also fighting for her daughter who is involved in her community. One might think that the government would provide help in that situation, but people still have to fight to get the services and quality of life they are entitled to in a country like Canada.

[English]

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, organizations and volunteers in my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and other communities throughout Nova Scotia work to support seniors. They keep many of our seniors going day to day. For many seniors, dealing with the pressure and strain, and the demands as a result of living in poverty gets to be an incredible issue

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of capacity. Campbell's Cole Harbour Senior Citizen Club, for example, provides subsidized meals. The volunteers buy the food and provide a wholesome lunch for seniors.

Could my colleague expand a bit on her experience working with those organizations in her community that assist seniors?

• (1230)

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for giving me the opportunity to draw on my experience in the field to talk about what is being done in the community for seniors.

Pierrefonds—Dollard has many seniors' organizations. There are organizations to help seniors, but there are also seniors who start up organizations themselves to create their own social networks in order to help each other out and to break out of isolation. People are taking charge of the situation themselves and if we give them the means, they can regain control of their own lives and improve society considerably. The volunteers are doing an incredible job, but they are exhausted. They cannot do all this alone. They need us. We are here for them. We just need to remember that.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the motion put forward by the member for London—Fanshawe and in admiration of her commitment to the plight of the approximately one-quarter of a million Canadian seniors living in poverty.

I rise to speak today out of respect for our country's seniors for the motion and the issue it addresses is most fundamentally that of respect. It is about recognizing that our good fortune as Canadians comes to us, not as a matter of chance or inevitability, but as a result of the work and the very many sacrifices of previous generations.

It is our parents and grandparents but mostly, it should be noted, our mothers and grandmothers who are the subject of this motion. We know intimately how hard they worked for what we today enjoy.

This motion proposes that we demonstrate our respect for the seniors of this country in a truly modest way, simply by ensuring that they do not live in poverty. That is all.

Yet, that is a lot because to be lifted out of poverty matters so much to those who live in it. It means enough food to eat, a decent place to live, the ability to pay for some basics and a retirement with a little less worry and perhaps even a little more pleasure. As much as anything, it means a little dignity at a time in life when dignity can be so easily lost and so difficult to recover.

That, one would think, is not much to ask of us, and it is not. The motion before us asks us to confirm that ending seniors' poverty in this country is fiscally feasible. It most certainly is. It is our good fortune that this moral imperative of ending seniors' poverty is also something easily done and easily affordable.

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The government budget calls for expenditures of more than \$280 billion for the upcoming year. This motion, contemplates a tiny fraction of that, something in the range of about one-tenth of 1% of total expenditures. In fact, the expenditure required to lift seniors out of poverty is even just a fraction of the adjustment for risk that the government has built into its planning assumptions. Lifting all seniors out of poverty amounts to about 20% of the \$1.5 billion annual planning cushion in this budget.

Further, I would note that since this budget was first tabled in March of this year, the government has revised its deficit projection downward by \$4.3 billion in 2010-11 and revised it upward by \$2.7 billion in the subsequent year for a net deficit reduction of \$1.6 billion. All of which is to say that there are margins of error in this budgeting process, all of which highlight the fiscal modesty of this proposed initiative to lift seniors out of poverty and the fiscal feasibility of doing so.

Now it is not difficult to anticipate a response to this motion, and we have heard it already, that would suggest that this economy, owing to global economic uncertainty, is as of yet fragile, that there are threats to our economic recovery and that therefore we cannot assume that revenues will emerge to cover the cost implied by this motion.

However, the largest threat to both the pace and extent of economic recovery in Canada is the adoption of the kind of economics that informs the government's budget. It is of considerable curiosity that the government, in response to the recession, embraced, however tentatively, the need for fiscal stimulus, yet now, with our economic recovery so far from complete and under constant threat, as the government acknowledges throughout its budget document, the government embraces an economics of fiscal restraint. Service cuts and corresponding public sector job cuts are easily anticipated.

Although we hear members of this House trumpeting job creation numbers almost daily, this motion is a good context for reminding the House and all Canadians that we remain 300,000 jobs short of our pre-recession employment figures.

In the motion we have before us is the opportunity, not only to repay the critically important debt owed to the seniors of this country, but also the opportunity to assist in a very effective way with the economic recovery.

● (1235)

I would urge all those contemplating the fiscal feasibility of this motion to refer to the annex to the government's seventh report to Canadians on the economic action plan. That annex sets out the economic multipliers associated with various forms of fiscal stimulus. Interestingly, it identifies fiscal stimulus targeted at low-income households, such as seniors living in poverty, as having the highest economic multiplier. That is the greatest propensity for creating jobs of all the measures examined.

We, of course, do not need economists to tell us this. We know it is a matter of common sense that if we put money in the hands of people living in poverty it will be spent to ensure that basic needs are met. To reiterate, we are talking today about one-quarter of a million seniors in this country whose basic needs are not being met.

We have in this motion the opportunity to do the right thing by the seniors of this country while, at the same time, adding stimulus to the economy struggling to recover and creating jobs for a Canadian workforce struggling to find work.

We have many options open to us to support fiscally the implementation of this motion. At present, for example, the government seems set to continue with its schedule for corporate tax cuts, dropping the rate to 15% by 2012. These cuts will reduce revenue by billions in this fiscal year, with further revenue losses accumulating annually as we move forward. However, a recent study has demonstrated the impotence of corporate tax cuts in Canada as a means of stimulating domestic economic growth and job creation. The study shows that capital spending in Canada by large corporations has been in decline for about 25 years, irrespective of the drastic cuts to corporate tax rates over the same period of time.

Interestingly, even the annex to the economic action plan that I previously referenced shows the relatively tepid and delayed impacts of corporate tax cuts. The annex makes it clear that corporate tax cuts have but a fraction of the impact of fiscal stimulus measures such as the very one contemplated by the motion we are presently discussing. Moreover, the corporate tax cuts result effectively in the transfer of billions of dollars to the U.S. treasury as a result of the differential in the corporate tax rates of our two countries, billions of dollars that could be used to lift seniors and many more Canadians out of poverty.

However, if it does not please the government to lift seniors out of poverty by eliminating or even delaying its schedule of corporate tax cuts to large and, in many cases, immensely profitable corporations, I would point to the government's military procurement plans as another source for funding poverty relief for seniors in Canada. The Canada first defence strategy contemplates a total of \$490 billion of spending over the next 20 years on a wide variety of military infrastructure and hardware, including, of course, the F-35 fighter jets. According to the government's estimates, as controversial and contested as they may be, the 65 F-35 fighter jets that the government intends to purchase will cost taxpayers \$9 billion, at an estimated \$75 million to \$85 million apiece.

It is an incredible understatement to suggest that there is ample room here for lifting seniors out of poverty without compromising our national security. The issue here is clearly one of priorities and not of fiscal feasibility.

It seems to me that every good policy has a sound principle upon which it rests. The principle underlying the motion before us is obvious and compelling. It is about respecting what others have built for us and acknowledging our debt to them for the country we inherit from their efforts. This is not just something we can do. It is something we must do.

I urge, therefore, that the members of this House support this motion before them.

• (1240)

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they say that economists and the subject of economics are uninteresting but I would say that my colleague has shed some fascinating light on what the government claims is an unaffordable cost in terms of the \$700 million that it would take to lift all seniors out of poverty, and not just a few as the government plans.

I have a couple of questions for my colleague with regard to the budget and the outlook for the budget. It is interesting because it says that in 2009-10, individual personal income taxes will be about \$103 billion and that by 2015, they will be \$151 billion, a significant increase on individuals, on the hard-working people of this country.

However, in 2009-10 the amount for the corporate sector is about \$30 billion. By 2015, it will be up to about \$39 billion. If we take it as a proportion, it is very clear that the hard-working people of this country will be hard hit.

What would the member do in terms of this tax system and where would he find the money for seniors?

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, there are many places to find money to support and show our respect for the seniors of this country who are living in poverty.

The one thing we must do is deal with the issue of corporate tax cuts. I find it very interesting that a government that has authored this budget and prides itself on fiscal responsibility has lowered the corporate tax rates with the aid of the Liberal Party of Canada to such an extent that we have effectively a \$6 billion tax transfer to the U.S. treasury every year. The foregone revenue to this country from those corporate tax cuts could very easily go to support seniors and lift many others who live in poverty out of poverty, including children.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, everybody in this House will have seniors living in their ridings. In my own riding, housing is not as affordable as it is in some other parts of the country. In the previous sitting in the House, the member from Vancouver East had a bill before this House on a national affordable housing strategy which would have directly assisted seniors.

In my own riding, it is very difficult to get home support care, which we know helps seniors to stay in their homes.

Could the member comment on what he sees as being an important aspect of contributing toward seniors being able to age in their own homes, having access to affordable homes and maintaining their health and well-being as a result of adequate housing?

• (1245)

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, it is most certainly clear that this country needs a national affordable housing strategy. As many members of this House will know, Beaches—East York is in the city of Toronto, which is a very expensive city in which to live. Many seniors in the city of Toronto are now living in poverty and having tremendous difficulty affording the homes and apartments in which they live.

One of the trends that we see in our city is seniors having to move out of their homes and communities that are easily accessible to

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many of the services they require simply because the cost of housing in those areas has become so expensive. In the city of Toronto and across the country, it is a matter of many seniors being forced to live in communities away from the services they need, which adds to their economic social isolation as well.

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite from Beaches—East York speaks to seniors being lifted out poverty—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I thought the member was rising on debate. Is he rising on a question?

Mr. Bryan Hayes: Mr. Speaker, I was rising in response to the member opposite.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The questions and answers for the member from Beaches—East York is completed now. We are moving on to the next speaker who is the hon. member for Huron—Bruce.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to the motion by the member for London—Fanshawe, who likely does not know that my grandmother of 85 years is actually a constituent of hers. I do not suppose she voted for the member, but I thought I would add that as a bit of feedback.

This is an important issue. The riding of Huron—Bruce, as many people know, is in southwestern Ontario and home to a great number of seniors. It has a beautiful shoreline north and south of Lake Huron, just north of Grand Bend and Southampton. It is home to a great number of seniors who have worked hard through their years and now enjoy retirement in a beautiful area that includes both Huron and Bruce counties.

In looking at what the government has done for seniors, I can think of one program right off the bat that has helped a lot of seniors, the new horizons program. This program involves a great number of seniors in our communities, whether in health programs that get them physically active or one, for example, that makes a building in the community more accessible. The new horizons program is very welcome and has had a significant impact in the riding of Huron—Bruce and, of course, all the others throughout this country.

Another great program this government has worked on at length, and specifically in this case with the Province of Ontario and counties or municipalities, is affordable housing. This is a great equalizer for seniors. Here, I can think of an affordable housing project that was approved, in conjunction with the province, for the riding of Huron—Bruce in the municipality of Huron East. It is a great program for affordable housing for seniors.

Yes, on one side, it is important that at-risk seniors have a safe and bankable Canada pension, old age security and, if they qualify, the supplement to top up their incomes. On the other side, too, on the expense side, it is also vitally important to have safe and affordable housing for seniors.

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I know our government has worked hard with all provinces to have affordable housing projects in place. It may surprise those watching today, and even some of the members opposite, that a lot of the dollars allocated in previous budgets for new affordable housing projects or for refurbishing existing ones were voted against by the opposition. We hoped they would support those projects, but in fact they voted against them. They also voted against the dollars for the new horizons for seniors program. That was also unfortunate, but be that as it may, it happened.

When we look at our initiatives for affordable housing, our government has been there for seniors, and if we look at the new dollars in this budget for the guaranteed income supplement, certainly the \$300 million is welcome. The opposition had an opportunity in March to make a statement to at-risk seniors saying whether it wanted \$300 million more allocated to seniors for the guaranteed income supplement or to spend that money on an election. The opposition, oddly enough, voted for an election and now is back at the table asking for more money. It is a little passing strange that this is the way it thinks, but we are getting used to it. I am nearly in my third year here and am certainly getting used to these initiatives.

● (1250)

I think back to when I first arrived here in October 2008. In 2009, when the committees were struck, I had the great opportunity and privilege to sit on the human resources committee, which was in the midst of a study on poverty in Canada. It was an important study of a committee that travelled from coast to coast, looking at all forms of poverty and low-income situations, how they arose and in what communities programs were working well, as well as a road map to lift all seniors and Canadians out of poverty.

While I was thinking of what to say today, I realized that every single opposition member of that committee did not get re-elected. Be that as it may, it is a fact. It could be looked at as a referendum on what Canadians thought we were doing for those at risk in providing needed funding. Whether for social transfers, health transfers, or working agreements with provinces for affordable housing, our government was there.

If one thinks of other measures to help those most at risk improve and make their lives more meaningful, one can look to social transfers and health transfers. This government has consistently increased dollars to provinces for health care at 6% a year since 2006, and the same for social transfers. These are great investments that help those most at risk by equalizing things.

The ironic thing for those listening at home is that they we will start to see a trend. The opposition voted against this. The opposition sitting in the House right here today voted against each and every dollar allocated for this.

The government and the Conservative Party of Canada are certainly here for all Canadians. We are here for those who find themselves in low-income situations. We are here for those who find themselves in what would be defined as poverty. We will continue to be there for them.

Another thought of mine in this discussion is that the issue is not where one is at in one's retirement years, as far as low-income or

poverty is concerned, but perhaps the 40 years leading to it. What we have done as government, what we have done in our methodology, is to try to help Canadians steer clear of poverty.

The government, initially through Status of Women Canada and later through Human Resources, funded a program to identify at-risk youth in my riding through the organization Rural Response for Healthy Children. These at-risk youth, including those who had had a child at an early age or young families who were having financial issues, were helped through Rural Response for Healthy Children to learn basic budgeting 101. This was a tremendously popular program in the Huron portion of Huron—Bruce, and it spread.

Once other counties heard about this program, they wanted it. With funding through Status of Women, the rural response organization did programs in Perth, Middlesex and Bruce counties. There were about half a dozen counties in which did a train the trainer program so they could deliver this information to the most at-risk youth, who perhaps did not even know how to write a cheque or open a bank account. They informed them of the most basic things, including setting up a budget for a household to ensure that the youth could live within their means.

● (1255)

So, yes, we have programs providing dollars for those in their senior years, but we are also taking proactive measures to help people have a little more.

I have a quote from a young lady, who is symbolic of those we are trying to reach. She said:

When I came into this session I was scared. My husband took care of the finances and never told me what was happening. We were always getting calls from creditors and we stopped answering the phone. I never had enough money to buy food, formula and diapers. I was pregnant again and didn't know what was going on or how we were going to survive. Then I took this training and I started asking questions about our money and where it was going. At first he was mad about it and then I explained that I had taken this training and what I learned. Then he wanted to find out what it was and came to some sessions with me. Now we work together on our household budget and we can finally say we don't owe anyone any money now. After two years we can pay all of our bills on time, we are better partners, more loving and kind to each other, better parents and two months ago we started a savings account. It may be only \$10.00 a month but to us it is the world. Thank you so much for offering this training to me and my family and for supporting us along the way. Things will never be as bad as they were and we have RRHC to thank for it.

That is a good news story. That is being proactive. That is working with those who are at risk and setting them up for a great future. Yes, it is only \$10 a month, but it will be \$50 a month and then it will be \$100 a month and things will grow. That was a program through Status of Women. We were fortunate enough as well to have a program through Human Resources, and we called it budgeting 2.0 or 102. This is a program to help people manage their finances, whether they have a dollar or a million dollars.

One of the main techniques was to get these young families to start thinking about their children's education and, although it may be 15 or 20 years down the road, to learn about registered education savings programs, to learn about the programs available to families to continue to build their savings.

Business of Supply

These are some of the initiatives that I give our government great credit for, initiatives that oftentimes we do not see in the news and do not hear about. These investments are not in the hundreds of millions. This investment with these two programs was likely \$200,000 over three years.

The point is that there is not one silver bullet for solving our issues of poverty among seniors and young families, but it is about a whole array of programs and partnerships to lift all those who are poor.

There are some impressive facts about Canada. Among the developed world, the developed nations, we have the lowest rate of poverty among seniors. That is something to be proud of. Of course, we would love to have zero poverty among seniors, to have no poverty among them at all, but we have not got there yet. We as a government are working hard. Sometimes we are working hard in spite of what the opposition members do with their votes, but we are committed to this.

We have also had other programs in the last number of budgets. We had the targeted initiative for older workers. This has been a tremendous program. There is even a work-sharing program. I see in my community, in my riding of Huron—Bruce, a number of small manufacturers with older workforces that have used work-sharing. This has allowed our older workers to stay employed and employable, and as we are coming through the recession, this has allowed them to maintain their jobs as they approach 60 or 65, or even beyond, if they choose to work into their further years.

● (1300)

Our government should be commended for the work it has done. I think back to the study we did on the human resources committee and the testimonials we heard from a great number of delegates. Our goal as a government is to lift all seniors out of poverty.

It is also important that we continue to grow our economy, so we can continue to support increased transfers for health care, so we can continue to provide the transfer payments to provinces so that they can provide the necessary social programs.

I can think of another great program that is just starting in our community. It provides dental care to young people whose parents are low income, so they can have a healthy lifestyle. All of us know that good dental hygiene leads to good health.

The federal government has introduced a great number of programs. There is a trickle down effect to our counties and local municipalities as a result of the social transfers. They are vitally important. We are going to continue to make those investments.

I can think of a great number of programs that have had an impact, for example, our retirement homes. We have funded programs through our economic action plan. We were fortunate enough to fund a program jointly with the province and the county for a retirement home in Bluewater municipality. This will provide seniors, even those low income seniors, with an opportunity to live out their remaining years in dignity, in a beautiful place.

Members should look at all our government has done in five and a half years and what we continue to do. Not that long ago a previous government slashed transfers to the provinces, which put pressure on

the provinces, the municipalities and the counties. They could not deliver these services.

We have gone through the greatest recession and depression in my lifetime. This government chose to continue to deliver to the provinces and the municipalities, so that those at risk would not be left behind. They were able to continue to provide the services that they provided in the past, and that is vitally important.

Back in the nineties, the previous government slashed programs and those most at risk, those most vulnerable, were hurt the most, were impacted the most.

We will continue with our programs. Through our stimulus programs, through our economic action plan, we have made great investments in our municipalities. This will make life better for those at risk, for those low income Canadians.

I would like to thank the House for the opportunity to speak to this issue. It is one that I am passionate about. If all of us in the House work together, we can make a difference in a great many lives of seniors and those at risk.

● (1305)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Huron—Bruce says he is passionate about this issue. However, I detected a distinct absence of passion and perhaps even an absence of recognition that we are facing a demographic crisis in this country as an aging population is left with insufficient resources to enjoy the dignified senior years that he was waxing eloquently about a couple of minutes ago.

Let me ask him about the double whammy that is facing us.

In the post-war years, we tried to address seniors' poverty and we did put in place measures that drastically reduced seniors' poverty. However, that curve has turned. It has hit bottom and is rising back up again. At a time that we have this exploding demographic blip of baby boomers reaching their retirement years, we have an assault on pensions; not only an unwillingness to increase the state-sponsored pensions but Thomas d'Aquino, in his wisdom, 10 years ago declared war on the defined benefit pension system and then he systematically set about to attack it at every turn. Now they are blaming so-called legacy costs on lack of productivity. It is an attack on pensions just when the demographics of the country indicate and dictate that we should be expanding, broadening and enhancing pensions.

How does the member explain this contradiction and a lack of action by his government on either of those fronts?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that anybody receiving a defined benefit pension would not be eligible for the guaranteed income supplement. The likelihood of that would virtually be zero. We need to be clear in what we are talking about.

The member has been in this House a lot longer than I have. However, just in the last three budgets, he sat in this House, at that time down at the far end, and voted against money for seniors in each and every budget.

Business of Supply

There comes a time when rhetoric is deafening. He can stand and rail all day long. However, at the end of the day his voting record is what counts. When he votes against new money for seniors each and every year, against new money for affordable housing each and every year, it speaks volumes. That should be his record that he will have to deal with.

• (1310)

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the comments just made by my hon. colleague. I want to thank him for bringing the Conservative government's record to the House. It is important that people watching, especially senior citizens, know the important measures that are available to them, many of which have been brought forward by the Conservative government.

Oftentimes the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre talks about the necessity of looking at the facts, looking at statistics. What we know today is that while it is still a number that is unacceptable, we only have 5.8% of seniors living under the poverty rate. This is the best in the developed world.

Let us look at the record, though. That is 5.8% in comparison to what? In comparison to what it was in 2003, when the rate was 6.8%. If we go even further back, it was 7.9% in 1999. So, clearly, the measures that have been brought forward by the Conservative government are truly resonating in reality. That is what we need to continue to look at.

I wonder if the member has any comments with regard to the statistics.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, we all know the guaranteed income supplement is recalculated in July. This is when changes can happen for our seniors where they would possibly receive this increased benefit. We are near the end of June. There is a lot of pressure, a lot of expectation, to put on our civil servants to be able to deliver, when we were faced with an unnecessary election. Now, two months later, had this budget and this legislation gone through, those lowest income seniors would know what paycheque they would be receiving, they would know when they would be receiving it, and they would know how much they would be receiving.

With the election, and the member for Winnipeg Centre wanted the election, he has put the dollars in question, the dollars in jeopardy for our low income seniors, our most at risk seniors.

Again, the NDP's voting record says one thing, but its voting record tells a completely different story.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was a plethora of issues in the member's speech that one can take exception to.

For example, in talking about Canada's low rate of poverty for seniors, I thought the member was going to acknowledge the Liberal Party for bringing in the GIS in the first place, and instead his comments were that it was in spite of opposition parties that we are in that situation.

I do need to comment that instead of being here for low income Canadians, the government has regressive tax credits that exclude low income Canadians.

In a place like Vancouver, where rent, housing costs and property taxes are sky-high and going up, there are many seniors in my riding of Vancouver Quadra who can barely hang on to their homes or their apartments that they rent because of these costs. The question that I want to pose to the member is this. How can a GIS increase of less than \$2 a day help lift these seniors out of poverty when other costs like food are climbing as well?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, the first thing I would like to offer to the member for Vancouver Quadra is that the \$300 million to the guaranteed income supplement, I would argue, is far better invested than the \$300 million that she voted on to spend on election signs and campaigns ads.

The member is in the House trying to lecture us, when she is one who voted to spend \$300 million on election signs.

With our efforts in our budgets, 85,000 seniors have been removed from the tax roll. We have had to drag the opposition, kicking and screaming, to take these seniors off the tax rolls. A single senior can earn just a little over \$19,000, and a couple can earn a little over \$38,000 without paying tax.

Now the opposition has to be dragged, kicking and screaming, to convince them it is a good idea. I do not know what they are offering, but it is not as good as what we are offering. Again, here we go, \$300 million for an election, that is what they supported. We support \$300 million for seniors.

• (1315)

[Translation]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I arrived here, I realized that no one in this chamber is poor. We all have good salaries and nice cars, and we have reasonably comfortable lives.

I grew up in reality. In my riding, I see people who face reality every day and who know what it is like to survive in the current economic conditions. The most insulting thing for them is to be told by someone who makes \$160,000 a year that, if you are poor, it is because you are not good at managing your budget. I think that is a bit insulting to the public.

I would like my colleagues on the other side of the House to be more sensitive to the daily reality facing the public. Earlier, when my colleague was speaking about the unbearable poverty experienced by some retirees, the members on the other side of the House were chatting and snickering. I think that is insulting to the public.

[English]

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the member opposite was listening to. He must have had the wrong channel.

I was describing a story about a young woman in Huron County who attended a program and learned about budgeting. I never said people were in poverty because they cannot manage their money. I am saying there is a program that the federal government supported through Status of Women to help women have another tool in their tool belt for their life. Is that not great? Is that not just the best thing we have ever heard?

Here is the bad news for this new member, your party voted against that initiative. With all due respect, it should be you who apologizes in this House for voting against this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before we resume debate, I want to remind all hon. members that when you are speaking, asking questions or responding, it is the Chair to whom you are speaking. There have been a few instances this morning when hon. members have not been sufficiently mindful of that.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Gatineau.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the comments from the hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle, who is completely right. I believe we should come here with the single goal of representing the people who elected us. The people who elected us are real, flesh-and-blood people. Increasingly, our population is aging. I cannot believe that someone here today would vote against a motion that states the following:

That, in the opinion of this House, ending seniors' poverty in Canada is fiscally feasible, and, therefore, the House calls on the government to take immediate steps to increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement sufficiently to achieve that goal.

We are talking about seniors, but I am also thinking about the children who were supposed to be lifted out of poverty by the year 2000. It is 2011 and that has not happened. I am thinking about the most vulnerable people, about seniors. The NDP campaigned on that. I will not let the members on the other side say that we voted against a measure that would have lifted seniors out of poverty; the government is offering mere peanuts. In all good conscience, we cannot accept peanuts. Supporting that type of measure would have been an insult to the seniors we represent. Members opposite are saying that I should go back to my Gatineau riding today and tell my constituents that I am proud to be offering a dollar and a bit to Gatineau seniors living below the poverty line. Shame on us all. That is what I am saying.

● (1320)

We have been elected to this House and we often hear about the Conservative government's strong mandate. That "strong mandate" was only 40%. Personally, I would never have passed law school with marks of 40%. However, because of our electoral system, the Conservatives now form the government. So be it. That being said, they must respect the fact that 60% of the population said "no" to their regressive policies, which do not work for the people we are supposed to be representing here.

My hon. colleague from Laurentides—Labelle is quite right. Everyone here today now receives a decent salary and does not have to worry about a pension, unless we are not re-elected, and we enjoy benefits that many people would love to have. I think that offering such a pitiful amount is positively shameful, when what we should do is stop playing petty politics at the expense of our most vulnerable Canadians. We need to get organized. Some people might wonder how much more money is needed. We need to determine how many seniors are living below the poverty line and give these people the means to afford somewhere to live.

I had a look at the NDP's seniors charter. In my riding, I won with 62% of the vote because my priorities are seniors, health and the

things that affect our everyday lives. Any time I speak to my constituents, I will tell them that I am here to represent their interests.

Business of Supply

There are people who simply cannot bathe more than twice a week. These are the seniors who have been placed in a seniors' centre, and since the state is taking care of them, people tend to forget about them. However, the state is taking care of them by giving them just one bath a week and so on. That is how our seniors are being treated. These people gave their all to our country. I find this appalling. When it comes to this kind of issue, it makes me really angry to see how people are playing petty politics.

It is true. It never fails. It was the same in 2004. I forgot to mention, Mr. Speaker, that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River. I know I should I have mentioned it sooner. I had even noted it at the top.

I forgot to mention it because I was so struck by the comments by the member opposite. He had the nerve to tell the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre that he voted against a measure for seniors. That is an insult to his intelligence. I hope that those watching us on television are able to fully understand that the people on this side of the House are working on one thing only and that is to provide them with decent and humane measures. We will not let the members opposite say otherwise. And when the Conservatives lost the last time, it was not, by the way, because of their budget. It was over ethics, over breaching the trust of the House. We are going to put things back into perspective.

It seems that adopting measures in Canada's Parliament does not amount to a hill of beans, because in 2006, the NDP seniors charter was adopted, but was never given royal assent. What did the charter say? I think it is awful that the charter was not enacted. It called on the government to work with the provinces, saying, "That, in the opinion of the House, the government should rectify decades of underfunding of seniors programs by creating a Seniors Charter that recognizes older Canadians as creative, active and valued members of our society, and that this Charter shall enshrine the right of every senior living in Canada to the following...".

It is hard to imagine that this has not been enacted yet.

This is what was guaranteed: income security, through protected pensions and indexed public income support that provides a reasonable state of economic welfare—I do not see why there is opposition to that; housing, through secure, accessible and affordable housing; wellness, through health promotion and preventative care; health care, through secure, public, accessible, universal health care including primary care, dental care, home care, palliative and geriatric care and pharmacare; self-development, through lifelong access to affordable recreation, education and training.

These are normal things that should be provided for every human being. I cannot understand how anyone can be against this. But what is even harder to fathom—and now I am speaking as the critic for the status of women—is the fact that most seniors living below the poverty line are women and they are being ignored day after day.

Business of Supply

● (1325)

You have to walk through long-term care facilities and low-income housing to see the conditions in which these people live. I cannot fathom why, year after year, the Conservative government cuts funding for groups that, on a shoestring budget, work on getting people out of poverty, and prevents them from doing their work.

This evening, who will be voting against a motion that simply asks the government to take immediate action to increase the guaranteed income supplement enough to get these people out of poverty? I can hardly wait to see the results of the vote.

[English]

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with intent to what the member said, and, in particular, about voting records. That member's party voted against the economic action plan, which has obviously saved the country from the downturn in the economy and many thousands of jobs. In fact, we have created more than a half million jobs since this started, with consecutive quarters of straight growth.

How can the member sit in a party that voted against Quebecers, against improvements in roads and bridges and against multiplexes? In particular, it voted against the \$1 billion for a green infrastructure fund for the country. It voted against \$1 billion for clean energy. That is the part I do not understand.

In fact, in Quebec there are many contaminated sites and the economic action plan looked at investments there as well, and her party voted against that.

How does she justify that today, especially given that infrastructure is used by seniors throughout the country and that was the largest investment for infrastructure in the history of the country in real dollar terms? How does she justify sitting on that side now when her party voted against that?

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I always have difficulty listening to any Conservative member who puts the word "green" in his or her speech.

[Translation]

The Conservatives could have lifted many seniors out of poverty using only the money that was invested in signs for the government's action plan, which they made a point of posting here, there and everywhere over the past year. That would have been a good start.

The hon. member is asking me how I can sit on this side of the House. It is very easy, because over here, we think that people should take priority over bricks and mortar.

It is all well and good to have nice roads and I am in favour of nice roads and bridges, but they will not do us much good if people cannot even use them because they cannot afford to buy a vehicle or to use public transit. We have before us a question of priorities and budget management. The answer is not to spend more money; the NDP is not going to drive the country into bankruptcy. Rather, instead of giving the head of a large corporation \$1 million in profits, why not give him \$500,000 and give the rest to someone else?

[English]

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, will the member from the New Democratic Party, as well the party as a whole, join with me and the Liberal Party of Canada in protecting the rights of seniors and protecting the financial viability of seniors regarding changes that have occurred through the guaranteed income supplement program?

Changes occurred back on May 17, 2010, when seniors lost the capacity or right to what is known as optioning out income regarding removals or withdrawals from their registered retirement income funds for the purposes of calculating their overall income under the guaranteed income supplement program.

A decision was taken stemming from what was known as the Ward decision back in 2007 in which the Government of Canada sued a GIS recipient for improper benefits and the court struck down certain provisions that allowed seniors to option out certain elements of their income. The government has never responded by changing the law. The court advised the government to change the law to allow this to occur, but the court said that under the current wording of the Old Age Security Act, that provision was not acceptable.

● (1330)

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's first comment was interesting.

[English]

He asked if we would join him. We had a lengthy discussion this past weekend on that. We were willing to discuss it, but that is pretty much it.

That being said, on the decision of the court and the fact that it takes a while to implement, I am not sure the NDP feels the government is in tune with the core of the decision.

[Translation]

However, what I would like to tell the members of the Liberal Party of Canada is that, while they will likely vote with us on this motion, it would have been so nice if they had dealt with the problem of child and seniors' poverty when they had a majority government and a lot of money in the bank.

[English]

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand today to speak about this issue, particularly since seniors in my riding of Thunder Bay—Rainy River are suffering terribly. I am going to relate a couple of stories. I start to tear up when I even think about them, but I will talk about them in a minute.

This issue is not like finding a needle in a haystack. It is as easy as finding hay in a haystack and we can do it. What New Democrats said in their platform they have always stood for, which I will read. It states:

We will increase the annual Guaranteed Income Supplement to a sufficient level in the first budget to lift every senior in Canada out of poverty immediately.

We can do that. Retirement security has always been a priority of the New Democratic Party. It has always been a priority of parties which came before it. In 1927 was the very first pension legislation in this country, brought in by the Independent Labour Party, one of the NDP's forerunners. When New Democrats speak about this motion today, we speak from authority, from history and decades and decades of trying to ensure that seniors do not live in poverty.

What we are faced with now is about 250,000 seniors in this country living in poverty. The debate is not even so much about GIS or CPP as it is about respect and dignity. Those are two things we in the NDP want to talk about today because respect and dignity are what many of our seniors do not have.

I conducted a telephone town hall meeting before the election and there were 8,500 people on the line from my riding. Overwhelmingly, the two things people mentioned in that meeting as being most important were affordability and retirement security. I suspect that is felt right across this country in every riding, rural and urban.

In this budget the Conservatives talk about \$1.64 a day for seniors. Everyone in the House will remember that the government, along with the governments of Ontario and British Columbia, conspired to charge seniors an average of \$3 a day in HST. That is the average seniors pay in HST. They get \$1.64 in this budget, which the government says is fabulous, and with the other hand it takes away \$3, and probably much more, in HST.

The hon. member who spoke before me talked about apologizing. I think it is the government that should apologize. It is the government that should apologize for \$1.64 a day and saying that is enough for seniors, for respect and for dignity. It is not.

The most vulnerable group among seniors is women. Women make up about 70% of poor seniors in this country. The poverty rate for women in this country in 2008 was double that of men. For seniors who live in poverty, almost 100% of their incomes come from the government. Therefore, \$1.64 a day makes me sad.

If the government simply looked at it in economic terms and took away the human element of its decisions, lifting every senior out of poverty in this country is good for this country. It is good for the economy. Where do seniors spend their money? They spend their money in the local communities where they live and they just want an opportunity to buy a present for their grandchildren on their birthdays. That is all they want. They spend it right in their own communities. Therefore, \$700 million to lift every senior out of poverty is \$700 million that goes right back into local economies.

• (1335)

I want to speak very briefly about some of the seniors I have met in my riding. If people need health care in my riding, they have two choices: Those living in the west end of my riding can go to Winnipeg; if they live on the east side, they go to Thunder Bay. I am not sure how every province works, but Ontario has travel grants. However, people have to put the money out first.

To go from Atikokan to Thunder Bay return costs \$300. We do not have trains. We have the occasional bus that goes by. It is either in a private car or a taxi. It is \$160 for a one-way trip. People have to put that money out first.

Business of Supply

I know seniors who do not go to the hospital when they are supposed to, who do not follow up on appointments because they cannot put the money out first. I know seniors who do not take their medications. They do not buy their medications because they cannot. Or, they split them. They take half every day, or use any other strategy they can to try to save money.

Let me give one example of the face of poverty in my riding. In Atikokan not too long ago, I was speaking with a senior, a man probably in his 80s. His wife had passed away. He had raised four children. They were all gone from the community. He came in to see me one day and he said he could not pay his electricity bill. I asked if he had tried some strategies to reduce the use of electricity. He told me that he uses one light bulb and every second day he unplugs the refrigerator.

The HST from the government was the turning point for that man, for his electricity. That is what seniors go through in this country. That is what seniors go through in my riding.

I know, although there may be members of Parliament here who do not agree or do not see this, it happens in every riding.

What are the other impacts in my riding? Speaking about longevity of seniors, we all go to funerals, or read in the paper about seniors dying. We think that they should not have passed away, that it was too early for them to go. For seniors who have to live below the poverty line, we are talking about malnutrition, depression and suicide.

The biggest indicator of seniors' longevity is the number of friends they have. I do not know if people here know that. How many friends a senior has determines how long that senior will live. However, I know seniors and I talk to seniors all the time who do not have many or any friends. That is because they live below the poverty line and they are embarrassed. What could they invite their friends over to their house for? What could they serve them? What could they talk about? So, gradually seniors lose their friends. It is not because their friends do not want to spend time with them, but because they are embarrassed to spend time with their friends. That is sad, because those seniors will have a whole host of health issues and die before their time.

What can we do? What are the choices? If we do not buy one F-35 jet, that would be enough to lift every senior out of poverty for two years. If we ended the corporate giveaways to big oil companies and banks, we would have more than enough money to lift every senior out of poverty in this country forever.

• (1340)

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as mentioned by my colleague earlier, we have just come through one of the largest global recessions since the Great Depression and the poverty rate for seniors has gone down from 7.9% over a decade or so ago to 5.8%. That is a credible change and it has a lot to do with the action our government has taken. I think 5.8% is too high.

Business of Supply

In the last session our government brought legislation forward to increase the GIS, to increase funding for seniors. Each and every one of those members automatically stood and opposed every initiative that our government put forward to help seniors. I wonder if my colleague could respond to that.

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that comment because it allows me an opportunity to say that in this country we cannot afford to have any senior living in poverty. We cannot afford to have anyone living in poverty in this country.

Government members talk about NDP members not supporting the Conservative agenda. Let me just talk about their collusion with Premier McGuinty in Ontario on the HST. If they want to know why we on this side of the House do not stand up to support them on that it is because they are costing not just every person in Ontario, but particularly seniors who live in poverty in Ontario. The Conservative government is making them poorer. Why would we stand on this side of the House and tell the government that we support what it is doing, that we support it putting seniors right across Canada back into more poverty?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight a couple of quick points followed by a question.

New Democrats seem to be focused on dealing with the income increase, yet at the same time there are many other aspects to getting seniors out of poverty. We need to take a holistic approach. Many different factors would go a long way toward bringing seniors out of poverty.

Toward the end of his remarks my colleague made reference to the cancellation of one jet aircraft. He indicated that would cover the cost of what New Democrats are suggesting.

I have no question in terms of priorities. We in the Liberal Party believe that the government's priorities, the corporate tax breaks, the millions that are being spent on a number of fighter aircraft, are all wrong. With the wealth that Canada has, why are we not treating our seniors better than we are and attempting to lift them out of poverty?

Do the NDP numbers tell them that the cancellation of one aircraft would more than cover the cost of bringing seniors out of poverty?

• (1345)

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Speaker, there actually are a number of questions in that question.

I agree with my hon. colleague that we have to take a multi-pronged approach to poverty in this country, seniors' poverty in particular. There is one thing that we can immediately do. We talk about doubling CPP over the next 7 to 10 years. We talk about a number of other strategies that would help seniors to ensure that they would have an opportunity to put a little money in their pockets so they can buy a present for their grandchild on his or her birthday. The GIS increase would provide immediate relief for seniors. I know members on the other side of the aisle agree with me.

The government said it would do something in the budget but they are always quarter measures, always tenth measures. They are not the measures that need to be taken. There is no real commitment from the government to ensure that seniors do not live in poverty in this country.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue as seniors are important to all of us. We all have important seniors in our lives. As a matter of fact I spent yesterday with some important seniors in my life, my grandparents, my dad's mom and dad, as well as my mom's mom. I had an opportunity to hear from them and hear their concerns with regard to what the government can do. My grandma just wants to let everybody here know that she needs her mail, if hon. members will do what they can to get that passed, I know my baba would be very appreciative that we brought that to the House today.

In terms of the debate today, we have an important discussion before us that we should be deliberating knowing a number of facts, which I will get into. The most important fact is to recognize that no two seniors are identical. We cannot have a one-size-fits-all approach to seniors in the same way we cannot have a one-size-fits-all approach to child care or any other issue facing our government today.

Therefore, it is important for us to consider that there are many seniors who are in a whole host of different circumstances across this country. That is why it is important that we have a whole host of different measures that we bring forward to address concerns facing seniors today.

It is important to recognize that we have seniors who are still in the marketplace. They are still working and still contributing in paid employment. Just because they are in the workforce does not mean that they are affluent. I know many people who are in the workforce simply because they feel that they need to be.

We also know there are seniors who are facing health difficulties, challenges with regard to their health care, but there are also seniors who are very healthy. Today we have a seniors' population in this country that is growing older than any generation before and they are healthier than any other generation before.

I am pleased to stand in this House today to talk about the many ways that our government is addressing the concerns of seniors, including the \$300 million top up to the guaranteed income supplement. This is an important initiative that is being brought forward.

In both budgets 2011, the budget brought forward before the election and the budget brought forward after the election, and during the election campaign our government came forward and said that it would contribute \$300 million to top up the guaranteed income supplement. That is an important thing that we all need to recognize our government is committed to doing.

Business of Supply

In my riding of Peace River, I met a many seniors who were very concerned and confused during the election campaign. On one side they had a government that brought forward a budget that had a number of measures that were very important to senior citizens. It was not just the \$300 million that would be dedicated toward the GIS. There were a whole host of other things in the budget that were important to senior citizens as well. They were very confused as to how the opposition parties could justify calling an opportunistic and unnecessary election that would cost over \$300 million to run in the face of the reality that we were under fiscal constraints. They knew personally that they could benefit from the measures that had been brought forward and had been stalled as a result of the opposition parties' torpedoing that budget and the budget measures that were included in that document.

Canadians are living longer and healthier lives. It is different from pretty much any other generation before. That means that our seniors are depending on their retirement income for longer periods of time.

As we work to help Canadians achieve their financial security, it is important that our government and all members in this House recognize that things are changing and seniors are living longer and, therefore, we must consider the reality of both.

The most important thing that I believe government can do, or does, is provide seniors with support through our public pension system. This system is highly effective. It is internationally regarded, and for good reason.

This year, Canadians will receive almost \$70 billion in benefits through the Canadian pension plan, old age security and the GIS, or guaranteed income supplement. The GIS, which provides extra support to seniors with little or no income, has been a great success in reducing poverty among seniors.

• (1350)

It is important to recognize the facts, and today, during the debate, it is one that is being engaged in. We have anecdotes that are coming forward from all sides. It is important to look at the facts because if we drill down into these facts we will have some revelations that are important for all of us to consider.

It is important for Canadians and for all of us in the House to recognize that Canada has one of the lowest poverty rates among seniors in the developed world at 5.8%. Now 5.8% is still a number that is too high, because there is nobody in the House who would like to see a single senior living below the poverty line, but let us recognize that this is a significant improvement over years past. This rate is lower now than it has ever been under previous governments. It was 6.8% in 2003 and, if we look even further back, it was 7.9% in 1999.

It is important that when we recognize that Canada not only has one of the lowest rates of senior poverty in the world, we recognize a time and a place in which we are seeing this happen. We have just witnessed one of the worst economic meltdowns that we have seen in the last number of generations, the great recession, and it is in this environment that Canada is seeing one of the lowest rates of senior poverty to date.

I watch the news, as do members across the aisle, and we see that, in other countries, simply holding on to the benefits that had been

allocated to seniors over past years is the gold standard. As we see governments having to strip away benefits that have been previously allocated to senior citizens, in Canada we are not only saving all of the things that have been provided to senior citizens over the last number of years, we are improving them because, not only do we have one of the lowest rates of senior poverty in history in this country today but in the world as well, we are working to improve and reduce that even further.

Our government's prudent and fiscally responsible economic approach is working. That is why Canadian seniors overwhelmingly supported our government's initiatives during the last election. The new guaranteed income supplement top up will target the poorest and the most vulnerable seniors, providing an additional annual benefit of up to \$600 a year for single seniors or \$840 a year for senior couples. This measure represents an investment of more than \$300 million per year and will further improve the financial security and the well-being of more than 680,000 seniors across this great nation.

It will also represent the single biggest increase in the guaranteed income supplement in over 25 years, and it is affordable without raising taxes. It is an important distinction that I am bringing here. While the opposition parties have committed all kinds of plans of spending billions and billions of dollars on a whole host of different programs, they have also committed to raising taxes on Canadians and Canadian seniors as well.

Looking at what the difference is with regard to what the parties are proposing, I wonder why the opposition parties voted against budget 2011 and why they forced an unnecessary and opportunistic election on the Canadian people, sacrificing over \$300 million in government spending that could have been allocated toward benefiting seniors.

I cannot complain about the results of the election but I must question the motivation of the opposition parties with regard to the forcing of the election. I have to wonder why Canadians from coast to coast elected a Conservative majority government.

• (1355)

After talking to people in my riding, and specifically seniors, it has become crystal clear to me that they believe in the plan this government has brought forward. They recognize that it is a prudent and fiscally responsible plan.

Our government has done a whole host of things since we were elected in 2006 and it is important to reflect on some of them. As we look at the reality of the statistics, we have seen the lowest rate of poverty levels among seniors today due to the measures our government has brought forward.

Statements by Members

It is important to recognize that there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to the issues concerning seniors, which is why we brought forward a whole host of different measures. They include: an increase to the age credit by \$1,000 twice, benefiting 2.2 million senior citizens; the pension income credit was doubled to \$2,000; pension income splitting for senior couples was introduced; the age limit for registered retirement savings plans was increased from 69 years to 71 years of age; and, the minimum registered retirement income fund withdrawal was reduced by 25% providing over \$200 million in tax relief to seniors.

Before those measures were introduced, those people were paying taxes. Today, as a result of these measures, 85,000 Canadian seniors no longer pay federal income tax. In 2011, a single senior earning around \$19,000 and a senior couple earning at least \$38,000 would not pay any federal income tax at all. I can say that this is greatly appreciated by seniors in my riding.

When I talk to senior citizens, many of them want to continue to play an important role in the workforce. It is important that governments continue to encourage people who have reached the age of 65, or an age at which they are recognized as a senior citizen, to stay in the workforce and be allowed to do so. I think we as Canadians benefit from having senior citizens in the workforce contributing in so many unique and important ways.

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I must interrupt the member at this point. When the House returns to this matter, the hon. member for Peace River will have seven minutes remaining.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the National Research Council has a proud history that goes back 95 years. Some of its key accomplishments are the pacemaker, computer animation technology and the Canadarm.

[Translation]

It has relied on great leaders like Jack Mackenzie, Larkin Kerwin and now, John McDougall. For over 30 years, I have stood up for the NRC and its cutting-edge science.

[English]

For the past five years, in this House and elsewhere, I have promoted the establishment of the technology transfer centre to better market the intellectual property of the NRC.

[Translation]

That is why I am proud that this government has granted the NRC stable funding that has increased by 17% over the last five years, to fund research, help businesses and stimulate the economy.

[English]

On top of that, I was pleased to announce two years ago temporary two-year stimulus funding to the NRC under Canada's economic action plan.

[Translation]

As Canada's primary research agency, the NRC continues to benefit from the strong financial support of the government.

* * *

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank the voters of my riding of Saint-Maurice—Champlain for placing their trust in me in the May 2 election.

I would like to point out to the hon. members that the residents of La Tuque, the birthplace of Félix Leclerc, are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of their city this year. A number of activities will be held during the summer to mark the occasion.

I would also like to highlight the efforts made by the city of Shawinigan to create new, original, dynamic industries in response to the many economic shocks that have hit the wood processing industry.

My constituents have shown courage and determination as they struggle to deal with the restructuring of the global economy. I would like to take this opportunity to let them know that they can count on my continued support in the search for viable economic solutions for the regions.

* * *

[English]

AFGHANISTAN

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, mission accomplished. Now that Operation Athena, Canada's participation in the International Security Assistance Force, ISAF, in Afghanistan is drawing to a close, it is with great pride that I recognize the more than 8,500 CFB Petawawa-based military personnel who served in Afghanistan. It has been a long haul from when troops were put on the ground back in 2002.

Our men and women in uniform are motivated by a love of comradeship and a desire to serve our country. We will never forget those soldiers who paid the ultimate sacrifice for Canada.

Canadians recognize efforts to bring stability and the rule of law to Afghanistan. As a result, there has been a significant transformation in attitude in Canada as a result of our mission in Afghanistan.

A decade ago, many commentators had written off our military: no more. We have gone from being NATO's biggest freeloader to becoming a respected member of the Western Alliance.

A grateful nation says thanks.

HUMAN RIGHTS WALKWAY

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on July 1, Canada Day, the municipality of Côte Saint-Luc, in my riding of Mount Royal, will induct Burmese democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, honorary Canadian citizen, Nobel Peace Laureate and a great heroine of our time, into the municipality's Human Rights Walkway.

Aung San Suu Kyi will join the pantheon of human rights heroes in the walkway, which include: Raoul Wallenberg, Canada's first honorary citizen; former chief justices Antonio Lamer and Gilles Deschênes of the Supreme Court of Canada and the Superior Court of Quebec, respectively; international jurists René Cassin and John Humphrey; and aboriginal heroine Mary Two-Axe Early.

[Translation]

I would like to commend the mayor of Côte Saint-Luc, Anthony Housefather, as well as the members of the city council, who have made the promotion and protection of human rights a priority in their work.

* * *

• (1405)

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Speaker. Above all, I would like to warmly thank the people in the riding of Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher who chose to express their social democratic values by giving me the mandate to represent them. It is a privilege and a responsibility that I will honour with dedication and pride.

I would also like to thank the volunteers, without whom, we all know, political life would be very difficult. Thank you to the three women in my life who supported me in this great endeavour: my daughters, Marilou and Rose, as well as their mother, Johanne. I would also like to thank a fourth woman, my mother, who is 80 and who has tirelessly supported the NDP for more than 20 years. She, too, put in time and hard work.

As the sport critic and deputy Canadian heritage critic, I will ensure, for one, that the Pointe-de-Longueuil development project benefits everyone in Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher by improving the bike path network and its access to the Longueuil metro. Above all, I will ensure that people in the riding again have natural access to the banks of the St. Lawrence.

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[English]

CITY OF BRAMPTON

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the city of Brampton, also known as the Flower City, and its residents on holding its immensely successful sixth Flower City Parade. The parade is a great way to start off the summer. It allows all Bramptonians the opportunity to connect with our community and its heritage, as well as enjoy the day of entertainment and fun. The event drew thousands of Bramptonians to the downtown core to watch the float and entertainers.

Statements by Members

This year's parade had a unique theme. It was "Brampton Welcomes Bollywood". As the International Indian Film Academy award celebrations are set to begin in the GTA this week, Brampton also welcomed numerous Bollywood stars during the parade.

The event was a tremendous success. I want to acknowledge hundreds of volunteers for the hard work that went into planning and executing such a great event for all Bramptonians to enjoy.

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BIRTHDAY WISHES

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to Mr. Alex Sim of Kamloops as he celebrates his 86th birthday today with 419 Squadron in Cold Lake, Alberta.

At the age of 16, Mr. Sim tried to join the RCAF during the Second World War, but was rejected because of his age. Undeterred, he joined the Canadian army and participated in the Normandy campaign and later served in the Korean War.

Although he went on to a successful career in the army, his passion has always been for flight. He served as president of the Pacific Group of the Air Force Association and as a member of the 886 (Overlander) Wing in Kamloops.

Over the years, he served as a liaison officer between 419 Squadron and 886 Wing. Last year, he was recognized for his years of service and given the honorary title of commanding officer of 419 Squadron.

Recognized by his feisty presence, commanding voice and impressive historical knowledge, please join me in wishing Mr. Sim a happy birthday and to thank him for his dedication to the armed forces and our country.

* * *

[Translation]

REPENTIGNY RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank my constituents, the people of Repentigny, for placing their trust in me on May 2.

My riding is a great place to live. Proof of this is the fact that, even though a multinational like Electrolux is closing, even though families and seniors are getting poorer, and even though our SMEs are overtaxed, the people in my riding still managed to join forces, open their hearts, donate their time and even empty their piggy banks for a good cause: the fight against cancer. The Repentigny Relay for Life, which was held last Friday, has become one of the largest in Canada. Together they raised the unprecedented amount of a little over \$500,000 and organized an unforgettable evening.

I call on this government to reconsider its budget, to scrape together what it can and to give more to the people who are our everyday heroes.

Statements by Members

SUMMER FESTIVALS IN MONCTON-RIVERVIEW-DIEPPE

Mr. Robert Goguen (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by congratulating you on your election as Speaker of the House. I would also like to thank the voters of my riding for the confidence they have placed in me and for giving me the opportunity to sit here in Parliament.

[English]

As members know, we are quickly moving into the summer festival events. This is of course a time of many celebrations of much joy. High school students will soon be getting their grade 12 diplomas. I would like to recognize those diploma recipients who are from the high schools in my riding: École Mathieu-Martin; École L'Odyssee; Moncton High; Harrison Trimble; Bernice MacNaughton High School; and Riverview High School.

There are also many other celebrations: tomorrow, June 21, National Aboriginal Day; Saint Jean Baptiste Day on June 24; Multicultural Day on June 26; Canada Day; and la Fête nationale des Acadiens on August 15.

However, the most important celebration that each one of us will have on both sides of this chamber is going about with our constituents at various barbecues, celebrating the most important event this year, May 2, the election of that stable national Conservative government.

● (1410)

PRODUCT SAFETY

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I rise today for the first time in the House, I would like to thank the good people of Mississauga East—Cooksville who placed their trust in me.

I would also recognize the coming into force of the consumer product safety legislation. Passed unanimously by the House, the new legislation reflects our government's commitment to the health and safety of Canadians. Canadian parents want to ensure their children's products are safe and the new customer protection law ensures government has the ability to act when unsafe products are sold in Canada.

I am pleased to announce that, as of today, these new rules, supported by all members of this place, will be in effect.

This is yet another example of our Conservative government's commitment to Canadians, resulting in the positive action that has been welcomed by consumer groups and parent across our country.

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is National Aboriginal Day. Under the umbrella of KAIROS, more than 200 representatives of Canadian church congregations today join aboriginal representatives in dramatically demonstrating their nationwide support for our action on the rights and interests of all of Canada's aboriginal peoples. Both church representatives and aboriginal leaders have reminded us that the

outstanding international commitments to the rights of indigenous peoples needs action now.

The Auditor General has reported that not only has the government failed to act on the majority of the recommendations made over the last decade, conditions have worsened for first nations housing, education and basic necessities of life, a disparity he found unacceptable in a country as rich as Canada.

However, I am confident that together with the New Democrat aboriginal commission, we will bring heightened energy and attention to the significant challenges facing Canadian first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

I encourage all members of the House to join us in tomorrow's celebrations.

WORLD REFUGEE DAY

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize World Refugee Day.

Canada has a long history of providing protection to those who need it. As a Canadian, I am proud of our compassionate tradition. Canada's refugee programs are world renowned for their fairness and generosity. In fact, last year Canada welcomed more refugees resettled through the UN than any other country in the world per capita.

For example, we have welcomed more than 2,300 Bhutanese refugees in several communities across Canada and we plan to resettle up to 5,000 more Bhutanese refugees from Nepal over the next few years. As well, we have almost completed the resettlement of over 3,900 Karen from Thailand.

Today I urge all Canadians to reflect on the courage of the millions of refugees and displaced persons around the world who are fleeing persecution, tyranny and oppression.

WORLD SICKLE CELL AWARENESS DAY

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was World Sickle Cell Awareness Day, a day to spread the word about a disease known to the western world for 100 years and to recognize and celebrate the courage of those living with sickle cell, a genetic blood disorder.

Sickle cell disease affects blood cells which carry oxygen throughout our bodies. In Sickle cell disease, red blood cells harden into long slivers that block veins and arteries, causing injury to blood vessels of organs, including the brain and lung. About 10% of children develop strokes. Children with sickle cell are also extremely vulnerable to infection and have periodic health crises that cause terrible pain and difficulty breathing.

Last week I tabled Bill C-221, An Act respecting a Comprehensive National Strategy for Sickle Cell Disease and Thalassemic Disorders. I hope all hon. members will educate themselves on this devastating disease and support families who cope with it.

* * *

• (1415)

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP clearly demonstrated this weekend that it is out of touch with Canadian families, workers and seniors.

With its high tax plan, the NDP is not fit to govern or to lead Canada through the fragile global economic recovery.

It is also demonstrating how reckless it would be to national unity by promising to re-open the Constitution and by allowing many sovereignist MPs to sit within its caucus. NDP recklessness would help pave the way to a third referendum on Quebec sovereignty.

The NDP's attempt to make it look like it is modernizing and shedding some of its radical ideology is misleading. It is not really changing and it is leaving many of its most dangerous policies in place.

Our Conservative government represents the interests of families, workers and seniors. Our government received a strong mandate to advance the interests of hard-working Canadians from coast to coast to coast, unlike the NDP that prefers to listen to special interest groups and big unions.

* * *

[Translation]

LISTUGUJ MI'GMAQ

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is the 30th anniversary of Listuguj raids. On June 11, 1981, armed provincial police officers and fisheries officers raided that Mi'gmaq community, arrested residents and seized their boats in order to prevent them from commercially fishing salmon.

It was 30 years ago today, on June 20, 1981, that the provincial government ordered a second raid, but this time, the residents of Listuguj erected barricades to prevent access to their community. In 1993, the Mi'gmaq government drafted the Listuguj Mi'gmaq First Nation Law on Fisheries and Fishing.

We are celebrating this act of self-government. Today, the Restigouche River is known as one of the best-managed salmon rivers in the country. This demonstrates that it is possible for the Canadian and first nations governments to develop and maintain reciprocal, non-violent relationships that are mutually beneficial.

[English]

Oral Questions

BETTY FOX

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate a life well lived, struck by grief yet anchored by hope.

Betty Fox, the wife of Rolly, mother of Fred, Darrell, Judy and Terry, passed away on Friday morning. We feel grief because no parent should outlive his or her child, yet hope because she was inspired by a fierce determination to keep Terry's cause, a cure for cancer, ever present in the psyche of Canadians and to keep Terry alive in her heart. It is what a parent's love does.

Betty Fox's great legacy was the passionate commitment to continue Terry's dream, his Marathon of Hope, as only she could. She was a reluctant champion, but understood the importance of her role when she was thrust into that extraordinary circumstance.

Yet this devoted, determined, compelling woman also gave us hope, our marathon of hope. She had a generosity of spirit and it was clear that she knew her mind when it came to Terry's legacy. Today, around the world, we run for Terry and we will always remember the mom who in every way kept his dream alive.

Betty made us very proud. She did her job. Her marathon is over. Now it is our turn.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have learned that the Prime Minister's staff, both in the Privy Council Office and the Prime Minister's Office, are not complying with Treasury Board rules regarding hospitality expenses.

The rules require that expenses be authorized in advance and neither the PMO nor the PCO are following the rules. The Prime Minister and his government like to make a big fuss about the importance of law and order.

How is it that the Prime Minister believes he is above the law when it comes to his own expenses?

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has cut spending on hospitality by more than 30% over and above the previous government's record.

To be clear, measures were put in place some time ago to ensure that any necessary spending on coffee or on limited hospitality was in fact approved beforehand.

Oral Questions

● (1420)

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as is the case with his Treasury Board president who broke all the rules, the Prime Minister does not seem to understand that if he is going to preach restraint, he had better lead by example.

A trip with friends and family to a hockey game in Boston, \$100,000. Watching the government avoid the question, priceless.

Why is it that the Prime Minister has just written to his ministers to require them to follow the rules and tighten their budgets when his office is breaking those very rules and his own budget is completely out of control?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, I am not exactly sure what the hon. member is going on about.

Again, it is our government that has cut spending on hospitality by some 30%. We have in fact improved on the approval process.

Just because we are reducing hospitality spending does not make us inhospitable. We are such warm people over here.

* * *

*[Translation]***CANADA POST**

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government claims to be acting in good faith. Let us see. Our collective bargaining system is based on good faith. In the case of Canada Post, it was the government itself, through a crown corporation, that locked out Canada Post employees. This same government is now turning around, pointing at the situation it created, and saying that it must put an end to the lockout it created by introducing a special law to break workers' rights.

Is that acting in good faith?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers have had an ample amount of time to discuss their issues at a bargaining table and, indeed, to use the collective bargaining process.

We have been part of that, too. What we have been doing is facilitating, either through conciliation or mediation, or indeed through my trying to bring the parties to focus their attention on the issues, because, at the end of the day, the work stoppage affects all Canadians, small businesses and charities, and that is what needs to be addressed.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is threatening back to work legislation for Canada Post workers.

However, the limited rolling strike is not what disrupted Canada's mail services. It was the lockout of 9,000 mail carriers by Canada Post. At stake are pensions, health and safety conditions, and fair wages for the next generation of Canadian workers.

Why is the government interfering in these negotiations and trampling on free collective bargaining?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we stated before, the parties to the dispute have been unable to attain a collective bargaining agreement thus far.

That is why the Canadian government is proposing to introduce back to work legislation. That is exactly what I will do today at 3 o'clock.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is going to take rights away from workers.

[Translation]

Canada Post employees took legitimate measures to assert their rights. The employees decided to stand up for their rights, but they also decided to continue serving the population. The employer decided otherwise. Canada Post decided that it did not care about the Canadian people or the service it is supposed to provide.

Why not denounce the employer's position? Why is the government going to reward this attitude with back-to-work legislation?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is both parties at the table who are negotiating and who have been unable to attain an agreement.

That is why we are acting on behalf of Canadians, on behalf of small businesses, on behalf of charities, who are being affected by this work stoppage across the country. As I said, that is exactly why we will be introducing back to work legislation today.

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PENSIONS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things the minister just said was that she was trying to get the parties to focus on the issues.

It is very clear that one of the key issues is that workers who used to be able to rely on a defined benefit plan that would provide them with a degree of security are no longer able to rely on that security with respect to major employers in the country. This is a pattern that has been growing. The fact remains that the defined benefit provision has been one of the main pillars of the Canadian pension system.

What is the government doing to make sure that this pillar does not simply crumble?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the context of the negotiations at the table, the parties have been able to narrowly define three or four issues that are in contention. Unfortunately, they have not been able to find a process or even come to an agreement themselves on those three issues. I encourage the parties to find their own way, find a process and come to an agreement. But if they cannot, today at three o'clock, we will be tabling back to work legislation.

• (1425)

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not hear an answer to my question about pensions. This issue affects not just the workers at Canada Post, but all workers in the country. It is evident that there will be more strikes this year and next if we do not find a solution that provides more security for Canadian workers.

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, it is this party that actually recognized the inconsistency with retirement income in this country.

We are working with our partners, the provinces and the territories. Over 63% of Canadians do not have either a defined benefit or a defined contribution plan. We are making sure that it is equal and fair for all Canadians.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have failed again to seriously deal with the pension crisis facing Canada.

Last week, all the finance minister could come up with was to tout his plagiarized version of Australia's experiment with pooled retirement pension plans. But Australia has found out already that its plan only resulted in higher fees and program costs and did not help the average Australian.

When is the government going to learn from the mistakes of others and start working to really help Canadians prepare for retirement?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only mistake we will not follow is that of the Liberal government that chose to do nothing about this. This situation did not just happen overnight. This has taken years to build.

We have reduced taxes for seniors by \$2 billion. That is an important benefit for them, but it is not all that they need. They need assistance in saving for their own retirement. That is what we are putting together in conjunction with the provinces. We will be bringing that idea forward to the House very soon, a shared plan with our partners in the provinces.

* * *

[Translation]

MORTGAGE INSURANCE

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just before the recession, this government rolled out the red carpet for American companies that specialize in mortgage insurance. They invited the very companies responsible for the crash in the United States' housing market. With Bill C-3, the government is planning to take this risky policy even further.

Why should taxpayers have to assume the risks run by these American companies?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really do not know where the hon. member gets her theoretical facts.

Oral Questions

What has happened in Canada is that we have had a solid housing market. We have not had the kinds of difficulties, thank goodness, that the United States, Ireland and other countries have had.

Why is that so? It is because we have a well run system, because we have mortgages with recourse, because we reduced amortization periods. It is because we watch the system and when intervention is necessary, we intervene, as we have done three times in the last three years.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation was doing a very good job of providing mortgage insurance, and even returned a profit to Canadians. Yet the government opened the door to U.S. insurers, then pushed to relax the rules so these insurers could offer riskier mortgages, which they did. They encouraged people to sign on to mortgages they could not afford.

Why is the government asking taxpayers to risk billions of dollars for these private companies when CMHC is a much more secure, more stable way of helping homebuyers? Why is that?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thought the question was actually about the housing record. It appears that the member is just concerned that private enterprise could have anything to do with business in Canada.

We actually believe in private enterprise. We do not believe the public should take 100% of the risk in insured mortgages in Canada.

The other thing the hon. member might want to think about is that it is important to have competition in that sector, as it is in every other sector in our economy. Everybody in that sector, public or private, plays by the same rules, and we set the rules.

* * *

[Translation]

THE SENATE

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been promising for years to reform the Senate but he broke his promise to have an elected Senate and to limit senators' terms. His record is clear. Like the previous governments he has so often criticized, he appointed his friends to the upper chamber. How ironic that those he appointed no longer want to give up their privileges.

If the government's credibility is in doubt within its own caucus, how can it expect to have the support of this House?

Oral Questions

• (1430)

[English]

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we believe that the Senate must change in order to reach its full potential as an accountable and democratic institution. The effectiveness and legitimacy of the Senate suffers because senators do not have a democratic mandate from Canadians and can serve terms as long as 45 years.

Our government received a strong mandate. We are committed to acting quickly on reforming the Senate, so that it better reflects the values of Canada and Canadians in the 21st century.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is time the government was clear with Canadians about the Prime Minister's Senate reform plans. We all know that no matter what we do, the changes will be complicated. Yet, the government's message is all over the map. Heck, the Prime Minister cannot even get his own senators on side with his plans.

My question is very simple. Why will the government not just support a straight-up referendum, asking Canadians, do they support abolishing the Senate, yes or no?

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government received a strong mandate to reform the Senate and implement our plan to make it more accountable. We believe Senate reform is the best option to address Canadians' concerns about senators serving terms up to 45 years without a democratic mandate. We are committed to reforming the Senate, so that it better reflects the values of Canada and Canadians in the 21st century.

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been almost two weeks now since the Auditor General criticized the former industry minister's misuse and waste of public funds to benefit his friends. Yet the former minister has still not apologized and has not provided details on the projects that were chosen. This is becoming a habit. He also has not provided details on his plan for budget cuts. We have found out about some of them: the 40% cuts at the Canada Mortgage and Housing corporation, the 20% cuts at Environment Canada and the millions of dollars in cuts at the Canada Revenue Agency.

When will the minister start acting like a real minister?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to describe some of these projects and what was done. There is an airport in North Bay. The government helped resurface the runway so that planes could land on it.

There is a provincial highway in that part of rural Ontario that was repaved. That is important. A community centre was also built. It is now available for the benefit of the people in that municipality, and I could go on.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the 2011-12 main estimates will soon be examined in parliamentary committee. The President of the Treasury Board has agreed to testify, but only for one hour. But we think that it must have taken much more than an hour to set up his \$50 million plan for the G8 summit to benefit his friends.

Could the minister himself, or his foreign affairs critic, explain why we are allowed only one hour to discuss the management of \$250 billion?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a question for me that has to do with my portfolio. I want to state to the House that I am looking forward to going to the government operations committee to defend our estimates. We have a strong mandate from the people of Canada to move ahead with the right kind of strategy, the right kind of agenda for Canada and Canadians, and we are darn proud of it.

ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was reading the 2011 ethical guide for cabinet ministers and I notice the government rewrote it to say that ministers must obey the law. I find it astonishing that ministers must be told that "Thou shall not collude nor conspire to create a coven of kleptocracy in Canada".

The minister blew through \$50 million without documentation. Did the Conservatives have to rewrite the rules so none of the other ministers were as cavalier with the public trust?

• (1435)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there was another change in the guide that jumped out at me. Civil servants are now told that even if the minister compels them, they are obliged to follow the rules. Was this why the member for Muskoka shut out the bureaucrats? How else could he have passed himself off as the Daddy Warbucks of cottage country?

How else could he have gotten the three amigos, the mayor, the hotel manager and the minister, to divvy up \$50 million on outhouses, picnic tables and bike racks without documentation? How else could he have gotten away with it?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, try as the member might, he is not the member for Winnipeg North Centre.

An hon. member: Never will be.

Oral Questions

Hon. John Baird: And never will be. That is the real deal. I like the member for Winnipeg North Centre, and he is not the member for Winnipeg North Centre.

I am pleased to confirm to the House and to my friend opposite that none of the three individuals he mentioned approved any of the 32 projects.

* * *

G20 SUMMIT

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government hopes that if it keeps piling on the paperwork, Toronto businesses will eventually forget about seeking G20 compensation and just quietly go away. Toronto businesses inside and around the G20 zone suffered millions in damages and they are not going away. It has now been a year without compensation and these folks are still suffering.

The minister claimed he is ready to move forward and expedite this, but after a year the question is, when?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I share the member opposite's concern. Many small businesses were really affected due to the security issues surrounding the holding of the summit in Toronto.

The member opposite raised this question two weeks ago and then again last week. I asked him if there were any specific businesses that I could specifically look into on his behalf. I am very prepared to do that. I think he and my colleague, our friend from Parkdale—High Park, have raised a legitimate concern about the adequacy of the funding and whether the rules are too strict, and I am certainly prepared to review that.

* * *

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know the government's waste fighter-in-chief sprayed \$50 million around his riding with no oversight and no paperwork. Now we learn that the department of the Prime Minister himself has been breaking the rules on hospitality expenses.

So if the President of the Treasury Board is the fox guarding the taxpayers' chicken coop and if the boss of the fox is himself breaking the rules as well, how can Canadians possibly believe that this crew will cut government fat fairly and competently?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, our government has cut spending on hospitality by more than 30% over the government that the member served in. To be clear, we put measures in place. In fact, they were put in place some time ago to make sure that any necessary spending on coffee or limited hospitality was approved beforehand.

We respect taxpayers' dollars on this side of the House, and we spend each and every dollar with due care.

[Translation]

HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is staying silent on the messy issue of Montreal's south shore bridges.

The Mercier Bridge is blocked off, when it is not falling to pieces, much like the Champlain Bridge. People are having a heck of a time getting to work, and we are going to tell them an emergency committee needs to be struck because no one is talking. Montreal is being taken hostage by a lack of transparency, leadership and communication.

What is the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities doing for Montreal? Why is he not making the Champlain Bridge studies public? What does he have to hide?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his interest in helping us improve the highway network in the greater Montreal area.

As always, respecting our partners' jurisdictions is immensely important for our government, whether our partners are at the municipal level, or at the provincial level, as is the case for provincial highways. The Quebec government and the federal government each own 50% of the Mercier Bridge. I will be pleased to continue working with my colleague to improve things for the people of Montreal.

* * *

[English]

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the second year in a row massive flooding is damaging Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Another five inches of rain fell this past weekend in places like Yellow Grass, Radville, Weyburn, Estevan and Roche Percee. Infrastructure has again been eroded and millions of acres of farmland will not get seeded again. The western premiers want a better national response to such disasters.

Could premiers Wall and Selinger be assured today that the federal government would support a new national disaster strategy with greater federal compensation and more investment in prevention in the first place?

• (1440)

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do share concerns with the provinces that are experiencing flooding. Our government is committed to helping the provinces, whether it be Manitoba, Saskatchewan, or Quebec, to help mitigate the disaster and afterward. We are committed to supporting all provinces with any flooding situation.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over the past two years, this government has spent \$1 million trying to sell the international community on an idea that no one wants to buy: carbon capture and storage. Our partners know that this technology is inadequate.

How can the minister justify spending \$1 million on trying to sell this unproven technology? Does he not realize that he is only damaging our international reputation even further?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would refer my colleague to the case of Saskatchewan where, after a wise investment of \$242 million and a pilot project on carbon capture, the Government of Saskatchewan found that, in fact, the technology does work and announced the investment of \$1 billion into a carbon capture project.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know what works and the government keeps promising energy efficiency, but it is failing to deliver. The government claimed that there were greenhouse gas reductions through the eco-energy retrofit program and the renewables program, but it is letting these programs lapse. Instead of increasing investment in renewable energy, the government spent \$1 million lobbying the U.S.

Why will the minister not wake up to the fact that Canada needs real investment in technologies that work and not more investment in the lobbying industry?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to our plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and hit our 2020 targets, we are on course and proceeding in that direction.

With regard to communications with Washington, that is a matter for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to communicate, where needed, with those who are under-informed or misinformed.

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ASBESTOS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Rotterdam convention meeting on hazardous material starts today in Geneva.

In 2006 and 2008, the government blocked chrysotile asbestos from being added to the list against Health Canada's recommendations. Now the eyes of the world are back on the government to see if Canada will finally do the right thing.

I have a simple question. Will the government allow chrysotile asbestos to be added to the Rotterdam convention, yes or no?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our position at Rotterdam will be the same as in Canada. For over 30 years the Government of Canada has promoted the safe and controlled use of chrysotile, both domestically and internationally. All scientific reviews clearly confirm that chrysotile fibres can be used safely under controlled conditions.

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member does not seem to understand that the Rotterdam Convention specifies that countries must ensure that hazardous material is handled safely. By opposing this classification, the Conservatives are putting the lives of many workers around the world in danger. Even former Conservative minister Chuck Strahl has denounced this position. He had the courage to take a stand.

Will the current Conservative members do the same and agree that asbestos should be classified as a hazardous material?

• (1445)

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Chrysotile Institute is mandated by the federal government, the Government of Quebec and chrysotile workers' unions to promote the safe and controlled use of chrysotile here in Canada and internationally.

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*[English]***SPECIAL OLYMPICS**

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, Team Canada travelled to Athens, Greece, where it will showcase the exceptional talent of our athletes and coaches at the Special Olympics World Summer Games.

I would like to ask the Minister of State for Sport what the government is doing to support our Special Olympics athletes as they proudly represent us abroad?

Hon. Bal Gosal (Minister of State (Sport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, since this is my first time to rise in the House, I would like to thank the citizens of Bramalea—Gore—Malton for electing me as their representative in Ottawa.

As we know, Canada is home to some of the greatest athletes in the world. Last week, Mr. Flaherty and I had the opportunity to send Team Canada on its journey of athletic excellence.

Our government is proud to assist Special Olympics Canada by including regional funding in budget 2011 to provide opportunities for Canadian athletes with intellectual disabilities.

This government congratulates Team Canada and wishes it great success at the World Summer Games.

The Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the hon. minister not to use proper names, but ridings or titles.

The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer.

[Translation]

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us get the facts straight: the National Research Council of Canada is the Government of Canada's premier organization for research and development. Yet we have learned that the Conservatives were going to cut the NRC's budget by 20%. The government's fiscal dogmatism is ruining the future of research in Canada.

Does this government realize that with this type of policy, it is only encouraging a brain drain toward countries with a vision for the future?

[English]

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's number one priority is the economy. That is why we have increased our investments in the NRC by 17% to support more research, help businesses grow, and deliver results for Canadians.

On top of that, we provided temporary two-year stimulus funding for the NRC under the economic action plan. That ended on March 31.

[Translation]

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of State for Science and Technology is a creationist. Would that not explain the cuts to the National Research Council of Canada?

This decision falls under the same category as the abolition of the long form census: less research, less data, less information, less accountability to the public.

What does this government have against truth and knowledge?

[English]

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I answered the question regarding the National Research Council.

With regard to the census, which the hon. member brings up, the government decided to bring in a different regime that does not threaten Canadians with jail time and fines simply because they do not want to tell the government what their religion is, or how many bedrooms they have in their house, or how much time they spend with their kids. Canadians find that, obviously, reasonable. We just fought an election and Canadians gave this government a strong mandate to continue in the direction we are going.

* * *

[Translation]

HOME OWNERSHIP

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, Mark Carney, said that housing is severely unaffordable for most households in large Canadian cities. The mortgage on the average home eats up 43% of household income before taxes.

How can families meet their needs without going into debt when they have to spend so much money just to pay their mortgage? How

far does this stranglehold have to go before the government finally decides to take action?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure members that is not what the Governor of the Bank of Canada said last week. What the governor of the bank indicated is that he had some concern in some sectors of the economy, particularly in the Vancouver condo market, with respect to some evidence of excessive prices, and that is so.

However, if we look at the Canadian housing market across the board in Canada, there is comfort to be taken. We took another step this year to reduce amortization periods and to require higher down payments. It is working. We are seeing some moderation in the housing market in Canada. That is desirable, but homeowners should bear in mind that interest rates have nowhere to go but up and they should consider that as they plan for the future.

• (1450)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is once again telling people to fend for themselves. Mr. Carney said that home owners are even more vulnerable in today's crises than they were 10 years ago. Today, people either cannot afford to buy a house or they are at risk of losing the one they have.

Does the government understand that part of its role is to ensure that Canadians have access to safe and affordable housing?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is looking for a housing crisis, she should look south of the border.

We do not wish that on our neighbours in the United States, but the reality is that their housing crisis continues. There is a danger of a prolonged housing crisis in the United States.

That is not so in Canada and that is because we regulate, we supervise, we monitor, and we have fiscal responsibility in terms of the housing sector in Canada, a very different place.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the more time goes by, the longer Henk Tepper, a New Brunswick farmer, remains imprisoned in Lebanon as a result of a commercial dispute in Algeria.

The more time goes by, the longer the Conservative ministers remain guilty of failing to take action to help Mr. Tepper. Yesterday was Father's Day, but no one in Mr. Tepper's family was able to see him.

When will the Minister of Foreign Affairs finally take action and enter into direct contact with the Lebanese minister to bring Mr. Tepper home to Canada?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very concerned about this case and for Mr. Tepper's family here in Canada. We know it is a very difficult time for them.

Consular officials in Lebanon have been actively providing consular support and assistance to Mr. Tepper and his family since his arrest, including regular visits to ensure his well-being and health.

Officials will continue to engage with senior Lebanese officials on this case.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was Father's Day, but Henk Tepper, a New Brunswick potato farmer, could not see his kids because he has been in a Lebanese prison for almost three months as a result of a commercial dispute in Algeria.

Mr. Tepper's family is not interested in an international law lecture from the minister. They want the government to take its solemn responsibility to do something, protect its citizens and intervene now to bring Mr. Tepper home to Canada.

The foreign affairs minister will be in the region in the next few days. Why does he not stop in Lebanon and bring Mr. Tepper home to Canada in time for his daughter's graduation from high school next weekend?

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that Mr. Tepper and his family have been actively supported with consular assistance during the time since his arrest.

There are regular visits, regular contact. I can assure the member that we will continue to liaise with officials in Lebanon on this case.

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it made sense, in a way, when I learned last week that the Minister of Agriculture is actually an ostrich farmer because he surely has his head in the sand when it comes to the Canadian Wheat Board.

He has displayed a wilful blindness to any reason, or logic, or democracy, or even economics when it comes to his irrational, ideological crusade to legislate out of business the largest and most successful grain marketing company in the world.

If the government is so determined to destroy this great Canadian institution, where is the business case? Where is the cost benefit analysis? Where is the impact study? Where is the liability assessment?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will try to give the member opposite some reason and logic and that is that our government has always supported farmers and farmers support us because of that.

They have given us a strong mandate. They want us to fulfill our commitments. One of those commitments was to give western

Canadian farmers the same marketing choice that the rest of the farmers across Canada have and we will do that.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have had phone calls from prairie grain producers who admit they voted for Conservatives but who are furious that they are going to dismantle the Canadian Wheat Board.

The grain producers told me they were always led to understand that the minister would allow them to have a vote, as the legislation says, on the future of how they want to market their grain.

If the government wants to give prairie farmers more choice in how they get to market their grain, why will it not let them have the democratic vote that is statutorily theirs in the legislation?

• (1455)

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite actually did say something about monopolies. He said they have a monopoly and a monopoly has to be regulated or reined in, or it cannot be allowed to exist. Is that not the socialist heartbeat: regulate, rein in, or obliterate?

We have a better way and that is to give freedom to western Canadian farmers, freedom to make their own decisions, freedom to take advantage of opportunities, freedom to do well and freedom to market their own products.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the WTO released the Canadian trade policy review. The report praises Canada's strong economic performance during the global recession and commends Canada's aggressive pro-trade plan.

According to the report, Canada's considerably expanded free trade agreement agenda marks a departure with its past practice. We all know the NDP is firmly and ideologically opposed to free trade as we heard during its convention. Despite this opposition, could the minister explain why we will continue aggressively pursuing a free trade agenda?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Miramichi for that excellent question and also for her hard work on the trade file.

Unlike the NDP, we recognize that one in five Canadian jobs is directly or indirectly related to trade and to exports. In order to protect and strengthen the financial security of hard-working Canadians, we will continue to pursue a low-tax free trade plan because we know it will create jobs. Canadians understand that this is a kitchen-table issue and we are pleased the World Trade Organization has acknowledged the merits of our job-creating pro-trade plan.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, finally aboriginal people in Canada have the right to challenge discriminatory treatment under the Canadian Human Rights Act. However, the national chief has made it clear that first nations lack the capacity and resources to effectively implement those changes. The Canadian Human Rights Commission itself has said the government's approach could perpetuate discrimination instead of ending it.

When will the government end the obstruction and provide the resources so 100% of the aboriginal peoples can achieve full equality?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is Aboriginal Awareness Week and that is something I would encourage all members to participate in. There are many activities going on in the capital region and across the country.

I thank the member for recognizing that the Canadian Human Rights Act now applies to on-reserve first nations as of Saturday, a very important event, something we can celebrate. We believe that first nation governments will accommodate themselves to this very readily.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been waiting for 28 CH-148 Cyclone helicopters since 2004. These delays have cost Canada \$6.2 billion. The Minister of National Defence described the agreement for the Sikorsky helicopters as one of the worst examples of military procurement, but he did not say that Sikorsky still owes penalties for the delays.

While Canadian families are tightening their belts, how can the government allow large military companies to take advantage of us by failing to collect the money we are owed?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we sign a contract with a military supplier, we expect its obligations under the contract to be met. The first interim maritime helicopter has arrived at 12 Wing Shearwater to support training of Canadian Forces air crew and technicians for the maritime helicopter project. It is important to know that Sikorsky has confirmed that it will deliver the 28 fully compliant maritime helicopters on schedule starting in June of this year.

Oral Questions

BANK OF CANADA

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, because this is the first time for me to rise in the House, I would like to take a moment to thank the voters of Prince George—Peace River for allowing me the honour to represent them.

I understand today the Minister of Finance took part in the unveiling of a new banknote series at the Bank of Canada. Could the Minister of Finance please rise in the House today and speak to the importance of these new notes?

• (1500)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River to the House. He certainly has big boots to fill, given the member who preceded him.

There are new and technically innovative banknotes. They were introduced today by the Bank of Canada. Canadians will see their story in the new banknotes. Our spirit of innovation and our achievements at home, around the world and even in space. In particular, the \$100 note unveiled today focuses on Canadian innovations in medicine, and the \$50 note features the Coast Guard ship, *Amundsen*, reflecting Canada's leading role in Arctic research.

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PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES CANADA

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Public Works and Government Services confirm the news just published by the *Globe and Mail*, which states:

Public Works managers informed their employees Monday the department will shed about 700 jobs over the coming three years...include the elimination of 92 auditors.

The cuts to auditing staff at Public Works come just as the department is in the midst of overseeing a \$35-billion wave of military purchases...that carries political implications as Canada's regions battle over the contracts.

Is it true?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as part of our continuous efforts to become more efficient and more effective, Public Works has achieved the strategic review target set out by Treasury Board. This was achieved with the oversight of former national security adviser, Margaret Bloodworth, and the former auditor general, Denis Desautels.

These savings will provide the room to continue paying down debt and investing in the priorities of Canadians, including lowering taxes for families.

Routine Proceedings

Retirement and attrition will provide the public service with the flexibility to manage these decisions without substantial job losses.

* * *

[Translation]

LABOUR RELATIONS

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by threatening to pass special legislation, the Conservatives are causing harm to postal workers by preventing an agreement negotiated in good faith. Knowing that the government will table special legislation as soon as a strike is declared, the employer has no interest in considering employees' legitimate demands. On the contrary, the employer is attempting to have the special legislation tabled sooner by imposing a lockout.

Is this not the Minister of Labour's real strategy, to rush to the assistance of employers who take a hard line as soon as the strike they themselves provoked is called?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at 12:15 this afternoon, I sat in on a conference call with both the president of the union and the president of Canada Post urging them both equally, to find a way through this impasse, find a process that works for them, to conclude their collective bargaining and come to an agreement. At this point in time it is harming nobody but the Canadian public, businesses and charities. That is why, in a few short minutes, we will be introducing back to work legislation.

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POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during question period, I made reference to my friend as the member from Winnipeg North Centre. I should have said the member for Winnipeg Centre. I apologize to the House.

The Speaker: I am sure the House appreciates that.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the Canadian Transportation Accident Investigation and Safety Board Act, section 13(3)(b), I have the honour to table in the House, in both official languages, the 2010-11 annual report to Parliament of the Transportation Safety Board.

* * *

RESTORING MAIL DELIVERY FOR CANADIANS ACT

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-6, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

• (1505)

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Finance on Bill C-3, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011.

[English]

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendments.

* * *

POVERTY ELIMINATION ACT

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-233, An Act to eliminate poverty in Canada.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I will begin by acknowledging the member for Burnaby—New Westminster for seconding this important bill.

I especially pay tribute to Tony Martin, the former member for Sault Ste. Marie, who originally introduced his Bill C-545 in the last Parliament back in June 2010. I will quote his words because he said it all. When he introduced the bill he said:

The purpose of this bill is to impose on the federal government the obligation to eliminate poverty and promote social inclusion by establishing and implementing a strategy for poverty elimination in consultation with the provincial, territorial, municipal and aboriginal governments and with civil society organizations.

This bill is an opportunity for real nation building where no one gets left behind, to build healthy communities and strong economies by taking advantage of the momentum created by the work being done at the human resources and social development standing committee and by the Dignity for All campaign.

I want to acknowledge all of the poverty reduction groups that have worked so hard on developing this bill and all of the good work done on it by people from coast to coast to coast.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-234, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (maximum — special benefits).

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present this bill, which would extend the maximum period for which employment insurance benefits for serious illness may be paid from 15 to 50 weeks.

This bill was introduced in previous Parliaments, but has never been passed at third reading. It is important to amend this 40-year-old measure. The amendment to paragraph 12(3)(c) of the act would allow people with serious illnesses to receive more than 15 weeks of benefits, as is currently the case. Marie-Hélène Dubé, who was behind a petition presented in the House in this regard, said:

A society that supports the sick during a critical time in their lives is a healthy society that helps these people to recover and reintegrate into society by avoiding the trap of personal and social poverty.

A few weeks of benefits can make all the difference. In order to give everyone an equal opportunity to overcome illness and recover, it is of the utmost importance that we extend the sickness benefit period so that everyone can obtain decent and fair compensation.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed.)

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the Member for London—Fanshawe, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to Tuesday, June 21, 2011, at the expiry of Government Orders provided that, notwithstanding any Standing Orders or usual practice of the House, if a recorded division is requested on any motion to dispose of the remaining stages of Bill C-3, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011, it shall stand deferred immediately following those divisions.

• (1510)

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS**DARFUR**

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of tabling two petitions. The first is from over 1,000 Canadians, including many in my constituency.

[Translation]

The petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to put an end to the humanitarian catastrophe in Darfur. Voters point out that, since 2003, more than 400,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million have been displaced. They are asking the Government of Canada to work with the international community and put an end to these atrocities.

[English]

This is particularly true now. As we move to the countdown for the establishment of the independent state of southern Sudan, atrocities have broken out again in Darfur.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from the grandmothers for Gilad Shalit, who have been concerned as we approach the fifth anniversary of his illegal abduction and imprisonment since June 2006 where he has been held in complete isolation and denied access to any rights afforded him under international law. No visitations by individuals, doctors, the International Red Cross Society or by anyone in his family have been permitted by his Hamas captors.

Accordingly, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to insist that the Red Cross, the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies uphold the applicable standards of international humanitarian law, which would include, at a minimum, proof of life, a visit to the captured soldier and communication between him and his family as a bare minimum, while using its good offices bilaterally and internationally to secure his release and return.

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my former colleague, Luc Malo, I am presenting today a petition signed by 350 grade six students from 15 classes in six Sainte-Julie schools, who want their generation and the ones to follow to be assured of living in an environment where the air, water and soil will be certified as safe.

I would like to congratulate Antoine Vézina, a grade six student at Du Moulin school. Thanks to his initiative, these young petitioners are asking the government to take the necessary measures to ensure that companies and factories drastically reduce their toxic emissions into the air, water and soil.

I will take this opportunity to thank Diane Bernier, spiritual life and community involvement leader at the Patriotes school board, who helped the children with this initiative.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand?

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Business of Supply***REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE**

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today seeking your leave to move the adjournment of the House to debate the issue outlined in the application presented to you this morning, about which I will now speak. It is a matter that demands urgent attention by the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board.

The minister has consistently called for the dissolution of the Canadian Wheat Board. We have learned through his answers in question period that the minister will, in the next session of Parliament, attempt to do so without holding a plebiscite of the wheat board membership, which is a sound democratic right bestowed on western wheat and barley farmers through section 47.1 of the Canadian Wheat Board Act.

The wheat board is a fundamentally important institution to many tens of thousands of western farmers and their families, whose livelihoods are protected by its crucial work. They deserve to have the act followed and to have their opinions respected in a democratic vote with a clear question, whatever the outcome.

This request for an emergency debate needs to be granted because Canadians, through their representatives, have a right to know why the minister plans to violate section 47.1 of the act, and to know how he will restructure the wheat board if in fact he does not obey section 47.1 and to know how his restructuring will be implemented.

Standing Order 52 explains that the House can adjourn to hear an emergency debate if the Speaker, in his discretion, concludes that the issue of the debate is: (a) within the scope of the government's administrative responsibilities and within the scope of ministerial action; (b) will not be brought before the House in reasonable time by other means; and (c) relates to a matter of genuine emergency requiring immediate and urgent consideration.

It is clear that the conditions set out in (a) above are met, because section 47.1 of the act makes it clear that the wheat board falls not only within the administrative responsibilities of the government but also that any action dealing with the wheat board's mandate will be determined by the minister and it is, therefore, within his scope.

This matter is a genuine emergency requiring immediate consideration as set out in (c) above for the very reason that causes this issue to comply with (b) above.

The minister has telegraphed his intentions to change the mandate of the wheat board, but he has not told Canadians how he is planning to do so and he has therefore comprised the ability of the wheat board to function effectively and has created confusion, uncertainty and alarm among western Canadian grain producers.

It is imperative that this debate be held today, because there is no reasonable expectation that this issue will be brought before the House in a reasonable time or prior to the House's summer recess.

There is also no expectation that the required vote set out in section 47.1(b) of the act will occur within a reasonable time before the minister's legislation is brought forward in the fall, if at all.

The debate I propose will focus on clearly determining if the minister is willing to abide by section 47.1 of the act. If he will not

abide by it, we will seek to determine for western farmers how he plans to restructure the wheat board and how the restructuring will be implemented.

I respectfully submit, therefore, that the issues are within the scope of the government's administrative responsibilities, will not be brought before the House in a reasonable time by other means, and relate to a matter of genuine urgency requiring immediate attention.

It is with this in mind that I appeal to you to hold an emergency debate to determine if the minister will skirt section 47.1 of the act, and to determine how the board will change under the minister's undisclosed legislation.

● (1515)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. No doubt it is of concern to him and some of his colleagues. I find, however, that it does not meet the tests for an emergency debate and, therefore, I would decline the request at this time.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North is rising on a point of order?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I wonder if it would be possible to ask for unanimous consent of the House to allow a debate of this nature to occur, given the very impact on western Canada. Could we canvas the House to see if there would be support for that?

The Speaker: I am not sure what kind of unanimous consent the member is seeking. Is to have some kind of debate later today?

I do not get the sense there is consensus on that, so we will move on to orders of the day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[English]***BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—SENIORS' POVERTY

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: When question period started, the hon. member for Peace River had seven minutes left to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to speak many times in the House since I was re-elected, but now while you were in the chair. Therefore, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Speaker in the House. Already we are finding that we made the right choice, that in fact you are doing an excellent job as Speaker, and we look forward to your responsibilities being carried out over the next four years and will be well served.

Business of Supply

Before question period, I was in the middle of my speech on the government's response to the issue of seniors' poverty in this country. I was undertaking to reveal some facts. In this debate different stories have been brought to the floor, but it is important for us as legislators to always look back to the facts. It is important that we review those facts, and one of them is that we live in a country that has one of the lowest rates of seniors' poverty in the world.

Currently, 5.8% of seniors live under the poverty line. We obviously do not want any seniors under the poverty line, but we have to recognize that this is one of the lowest rates in the world, and one of the lowest rates in Canadian history as well.

If we look back over the last number of years to 2003, the rate was higher at 6.8%. If we look even further back to 1999, the rate of senior poverty was nearly 8%. At 5.8% we know that we are making some significant improvements. Many of the initiatives that our government has brought forward in the last budget, as well as many of the things we have promised, will only improve that reality.

It is also important to reflect upon the fact that the GIS increase our government is proposing in the budget is the single largest increase Canadian seniors will have seen in the last 25 years. My opposition colleagues today have often suggested that if only they were in power, they would do things differently. However, under the Liberal government, even when it brought forward an NDP budget, this provision was not included and was not on its radar screen at all. It was 25 years ago that we last saw an increase of this magnitude. I think it is important for us to reflect on those facts.

Just before question period, I also remarked on the fact that our government had undertaken a whole host of different initiatives to bring tax relief to Canadian senior citizens. As a matter of fact, with the provisions that our government has brought forward since 2006, over 85,000 senior citizens are completely off the tax rolls. This means that 85,000 seniors who were paying federal income tax in 2005 and 2006 no longer pay it to the federal government at all. This obviously is a significant change and why the rate of poverty among senior citizens continues to drop.

Our government has done a whole host of other things that do not necessarily have to do with tax relief. In addition to the things we have done on the tax side, there is a whole host of other things we have done to continue focusing on senior citizens. Any time we make a change in any other department, we have initiatives that always take into consideration how they will impact senior citizens.

That is why our government and the Prime Minister appointed a minister of state for seniors. I want to acknowledge that we have an exceptional Minister of State for Seniors today, but this post has been held by two other extremely competent and remarkable female cabinet ministers since it was created. I want to thank the members who held this position previously because, due to their work, seniors' issues continue to be brought to the forefront at the cabinet table.

We have also created the National Seniors Council to advise the government on all things related to the well-being of senior citizens.

In addition, we have raised the income earned exemption under the guaranteed income supplement from \$500 to \$3,500. This is benefiting over 1.6 million seniors across this country.

● (1520)

We have also introduced an automatic renewal of the guaranteed income supplement, so that eligible seniors who file a tax return no longer need to reapply for this benefit year after year. This is one of our government's initiatives to ensure that senior citizens do not fall through the cracks and will not lose the GIS benefit if they do not produce the paperwork on time. Our government has worked across the board to reduce red tape for Canadian citizens generally, but we are also focusing that effort to protect the interests of senior citizens.

We have also implemented changes to the Canada pension plan so that seniors have the freedom to choose to keep working and contributing to their pension fund. This is important because, as we all know, the demographics of Canada are shifting. We know that the baby boomers are aging and that we face a demographic challenge in our country. However, we also recognize the absolutely remarkable and important contribution that senior citizens can make in their workplace even after they reach the age of 65, through mentorship programs and a whole host of other things. As a matter of fact, I know of senior citizens who made their biggest and most important contributions to the workplace after they were into their 60s and 70s. Even in this House, we have members who are making a contribution long after they are 65. So we know the importance of and believe in the freedom of senior citizens to continue to contribute in the workforce after they reach the age of 65, and to be able to contribute to their pension funds after that.

We are also very concerned about the well-being of senior citizens and that is why we have invested over \$13 million in a campaign to raise awareness about and to combat elder abuse. We are also bringing forward a whole host of criminal justice reforms that are applauded by senior citizens, because they know the importance of safety and security and living in their own homes into their retirements.

Mr. Speaker, you are going to cut me off, but I do appreciate the opportunity to speak on this important issue.

● (1525)

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the course of my hon. colleague's deliberations, the member for Peace River asked why Canadians and perhaps people on this side of the House were opposed to the Conservative budgetary and other policies.

Business of Supply

Well, I have a partial list. How about \$60 billion in tax cuts to profitable corporations? How about cuts to organizations like KAIROS because they criticized the government for its environmental policy? How about the abuse of our veterans, with clawbacks of their pensions? How about \$857 million for summits, fake lakes, gazebos, photo ops and partisan ads? How about their providing in the budget less than half of what was needed to lift all seniors out of poverty? What about the cuts to organizations that worked for women's equality? How about a government that used the Senate to stop NDP bills like the one for generic drugs for those living with HIV-AIDS and sufferers of TB and malaria in Africa, not to mention how it used the summit to undermine our environmental bill?

Why on earth would the government invest \$35 billion in jets and not in seniors when it obviously has the resources? Will the member support this motion to lift seniors out of poverty?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, I do thank the hon. member for bringing forward the motion, but in the question she does not get to the crux of the matter.

What are we going to do for seniors to ensure they can stay in their homes longer, that they can make choices that actually improve their own well-being? Our government is focused on that with a feasible, cost-effective plan to ensure that seniors will have more money in their pocket so they can remain in their homes and continue to live well into their senior years. This plan includes a whole host of different measures.

The hon. member was part of a party that did not even read this budget or the last number of budgets. Her party actually told the Canadian people that it was proud it had not read the budgets. The hon. member has voted against successive budgets brought forward by the Conservative government with the many measures that I have described today that have reduced seniors' poverty in this country, including a \$300 million investment in seniors through the GIS increase, the largest in 25 years. So even when the NDP was talking with the Liberals about a so-called NDP budget, it included no reflections on this as a priority. Clearly, that is why—

The Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

• (1530)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about issues such as independent living.

I agree that we need to look at independent living and allow seniors the ability to afford to continue to live in an independent way. One of the ways in which that can be done is through the provision of the necessary funds so they can pay for the pharmaceutical costs, which are going up, and some of the home care services that are becoming higher in need as people age.

Yet, at the same time, the public sees these huge increases in tax benefits to corporations and government expenditures that are questionable such as the purchase of the jets.

People wonder why the government is not recognizing the value of the seniors and ensuring that seniors who want to live independently are able to access those drugs. It is becoming more difficult because the cost of drugs is going up.

For the fiscal years of 2012-13, does the member see another increase to the GIS? Is this just a one-time hit?

Many, including myself and the Liberal Party, would argue that what we are giving in terms of an increase today is not enough. Does the member anticipate more increases to the GIS in 2012-13?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the remarks made by my colleague from Winnipeg North.

On the health care front, our government has made it very clear that we will continue to contribute to the health transfers and we will see increases, as we have over the last number of years. There are no cutbacks. During the 1990s the Liberal government slashed those transfers, but our government is committed to not doing that. We are going to continue to invest in health care across the country.

We have had a whole host of budgets, but let us focus on this last budget, the one that was brought forward before the election. The Liberal members, with the New Democratic members and the Bloc Québécois, voted down a budget that would see the largest increase to the GIS in over 25 years. They voted against that to cause an unnecessary and costly election. Talk about misplaced priorities.

Canadians, and especially senior citizens, recognize that this was a misplaced priority. That is why my hon. colleague across the way is now part of the third party in the House rather than the official opposition.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my fellow caucus member for some of his answers.

There was some comment made by an NDP member about the fictitious clawback. The change in the retirement regime for Canadian Forces members has been in place since the mid-1960s. Those members do not tell people the fact that members of the Canadian Forces at that time signed off on it.

We are dealing with seniors and what the government has done with regard to seniors. Would the member like to comment about the 80,000-plus seniors who have been taken off the federal income tax rolls since we have been in government?

I am glad the member mentioned the guaranteed income supplement enhancement and the fact that it has been almost a quarter of a century since we have dealt with that.

Could the member make some additional comments with regard to seniors and how important they are to our government?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, I will follow up with regard to veterans issues.

Our government recognized there were some necessary investments that needed to be made to ensure veterans were provided with the best care. That is why we saw one of the largest infusions of cash into the veterans affairs envelope, in excess of \$2 billion, to ensure we addressed all of the outstanding concerns with regard to the care of our veterans.

I am very proud to be part of a government that has taken real action on these issues. Unfortunately the opposition members have continued to vote against such measures. They have been solid in their rhetoric, but have never come forward with support when it comes to voting on these things and making these investments.

I want to get back to the 85,000 senior citizens who have been taken off the tax rolls completely. Six years ago they were paying federal income tax. Today they do not because of the many changes that we have made with regard to providing more tax relief to seniors so they can continue to earn an income. A single person can make over \$19,000 and a couple can make over \$38,000 without paying any income tax at all.

• (1535)

Mr. Mathieu Ravnat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member just does not seem to get is that this is about dignity. The motion targets the most vulnerable seniors, many of them senior women. The additional money in the budget will not bring these people out of poverty. The government's measures will not lift even half of the seniors out of poverty.

Currently more 200,000 seniors are living in poverty, some of them in abject poverty. With our motion, we can make a significant and positive impact on the everyday lives of people without spending all that much money. Why is the member against this?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, I am very supportive of the idea of lifting every senior out of poverty. That is why I am proud to be part of a government that has actually done that.

The hon. member talks about the motion having some capacity to do anything in terms of lifting people out of poverty, but there is no plan attached. Our government has the plan. The plan has been to lift all seniors out of poverty. That is why Canada currently has one of the lowest rates of senior poverty in the world. This is a remarkable feat, especially as we have just come through one of the greatest recessions and the most fiscally difficult times.

Where other governments have slashed benefits for senior citizens, this government is solidly standing with seniors across the country.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

I begin by thanking the member for London—Fanshawe for introducing this very important motion for us to discuss in the House today. Contrary to what other members have said, New Democrats do have a plan for poverty reduction. That was Bill C-545, An Act to Eliminate Poverty in Canada introduced in June 2010. It laid out a detailed strategy for poverty elimination in the country, and I was pleased to reintroduce that bill today.

I again want to acknowledge the very good work that Tony Martin, the former member for Sault Ste. Marie, did.

As well, New Democrats have also had other plans around helping people living in poverty. One was the former Bill C-304, An Act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians introduced by the member for Vancouver East.

Business of Supply

Contrary to what we have heard in the House, New Democrats do have plans around poverty reduction.

I want to remind the House, because we have had a bit of a break, about what we are speaking about today. The New Democrat opposition day motion states:

That, in the opinion of this House, ending seniors' poverty in Canada is fiscally feasible, and, therefore, the House calls on the government to take immediate steps to increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement sufficiently to achieve that goal.

There has been much talk so far today about the 2011 budget. Contrary to what members of the government have said, I can assure members that many New Democrats have read that budget as have many members of the public.

I will quote a couple of things from a news release from Campaign 2000 dated June 6, 2011. This reflects in part why New Democrats do not want to support that budget.

Gerda Kaegi of the Canadian Pensioners Concerned said, "The one measure to address poverty among seniors' is paltry". The release goes on to say:

The \$50 monthly increase to the Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors is only available to those on the very least income. This proposed change is about one-third of what is needed to bring single seniors – who are mostly women – out of poverty.

Further on in the news release it says:

This budget does little to bolster the tattered safety net that has left Canadians in economic insecurity. Aboriginal people, sole support mothers, recent immigrants, racialized groups, and people with disabilities face greater risks. At the same time, inequality between the rich and the poor in Canada has grown more than in any other OECD country (except Germany).

That comment was by Dennis Howlett of Make Poverty History.

I only have 10 minutes, so unfortunately I cannot go through all the reasons why New Democrats would not support the budget.

I want to turn briefly to a report "Federal Poverty Reduction Plan: Working in Partnership Towards Reducing Poverty in Canada" from November 2010. This was an extensive piece of work that looked at the state of poverty reduction plans in the country and made numerous recommendations. I want to quote a couple of statistics out of this, and we are talking about seniors today.

It says:

The GIS is an ideal means of reducing poverty among seniors because it targets those with a low income, particularly seniors living alone. In 2007, seniors living alone represented 28% of all seniors, but 60% of GIS recipients and 82% of seniors living below the LICOs. A senior living alone with no income other than the maximum OAS and GIS benefits would receive combined benefits of about \$14,033 (January 2010 rates), which is below the LICOs for 2008 (the latest available) for a person living alone in an urban centre with a population of 30,000 or more.

The people who are receiving GIS and OAS are the poorest of the poor of the seniors and often between OAS and GIS that is pretty much all they have for an income.

This article goes on.

Business of Supply

The member for London—Fanshawe ably outlined all of the reasons why the House should unanimously support the New Democrat motion, but I want to raise another issue that has not been raised.

Again, in this report it says that other witnesses spoke about the lack of awareness of the GIS. I want to turn briefly to the National Advisory Council on Aging, “Aging in Poverty in Canada: Seniors on the Margins”. It pointed out a couple of serious problems.

First, we have a program that is inadequate, but what we actually know is that many seniors are not accessing this already inadequate program. It says in this report that as no reliable statistics existed on under-subscription or late renewals, the National Council on Aging had research carried out in the summer of 2004 to assess the situation.

● (1540)

This research yielded a clear picture of under-subscription to the OAS and the Canada pension plan, revealing that large numbers of elderly seniors have not applied for these programs.

For a variety of reasons, seniors simply do not apply for these programs. New Democrats have argued that they should just be incorporated into a system like the income tax system, so that seniors at the age of 65 would not have to apply. They would automatically be considered.

Under OAS, the NACA report says about 50,000 have not applied and under GIS about 300,000 have not applied. Under CPP retirement pension about 55,000 have not applied. There is no estimate available for those who have not applied for disability benefits or survivor benefits. Many New Democrats have done CPP, disability and survivor benefit workshops in their ridings because many Canadians are simply not aware that they are entitled to those benefits.

This article goes on to say:

The sums in question are considerable. For example, the 50,000 seniors who are eligible for OAS but do not apply sustain a total income loss of \$250 million a year.

That is \$250 million that is not going back into our communities. When seniors apply for these benefits, they spend the money on food, on shelter, and minimal living expenses, which is all money that comes back into our communities.

The article goes on to say:

It is more often women, particularly elderly women, who fail to apply for the GIS – a group that is most at risk of living in poverty. It is worth noting that seniors who are entitled to the GIS but who do not apply are deprived not only of their GIS income, but also of all the other benefits provided through provincial and territorial programs that use the GIS as an eligibility criterion.

Not only is it affecting their GIS, but it is affecting some of their other provincial benefits. That is why it is so important that we look at a system that makes it far easier for seniors to access these benefits.

I know we are talking about the GIS, but I want to talk briefly about CPP because there is another huge injustice built into this program.

Lateness in applying for CPP benefits causes serious prejudice. Currently, a person who is late applying for his or her pension under

the CPP is only entitled to 11 months of retroactive benefits. The case of a woman named Isabel, age 90, is cited. She discovers that she has been entitled to the CPP survivor benefit for the past 15 years but did not know it. Her husband Jim died at the age of 83 without ever drawing a pension. Her late application means she is entitled to retroactive benefits for a mere 11 months, even though her husband contributed to the plan while he was working and the money was his due and hers. That is a very sad statement. This is another case of late renewal.

In July year after year GIS and allowance recipients must renew their application for benefits by filling out an income tax declaration or a renewal form. Every year close to 100,000 seniors fail to renew their application on time. At present, they are sent a reminder with an enclosed renewal application form. If they fail to respond, they are temporarily excluded from the program and do not receive their benefits for July or the following month until the application for renewal is completed.

The report goes on to talk about 105,000 seniors who did not receive their GIS cheque and more than 9,000 who did not receive their allowance benefits because they had not completed their renewal on time. For many seniors this is an issue of low literacy, little or no knowledge of the programs, language barriers, and sometimes there are mental health issues. We need to make it as easy as possible for seniors.

I will just make a little note on this. A person receiving GIS benefits can lose up to \$561 each month. So it is a significant amount of money for people who are living in poverty.

It is unfortunate that my time is up because I wanted to talk about hunger count and the food banks, and the fact that we are seeing an increasing number of seniors using food banks. The 2010 report indicated that the number of seniors helped by food banks grew this year from 5.5% of adults in 2008-09 to 7.2% in 2010. In some provinces, like Ontario, it was 12% and in Manitoba it was 15%. We are seeing some serious problems in our country. Seniors are being forced into using food banks just to keep food on their tables.

I would urge all members of the House to support the motion put forward by the member for London—Fanshawe. This is a small step in the right direction to help lift seniors out of poverty.

● (1545)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, governments have shown in the past that a difference can be made in poverty rates. When we look back to the 1980s when poverty in seniors communities was about 21%, our predecessors and those who came before us had made some good decisions. I think the guaranteed income supplement is something that has had an impact and will continue to have an impact.

Tony Martin from the NDP and Mike Savage, former member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, did an awful lot on this file. The Conservative chair at the time was very gracious and said that the study tabled in November 2010 was a good study. At the time, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives had identified that an increase in the GIS of about 15% would have done a considerable amount to lift seniors out of poverty.

The NDP's platform had identified about \$700 million. The suggestion was \$1.2 million. I am wondering why that gap had not been bridged or addressed in the motion. Why did we not look at bridging the gap between the two numbers?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, of course, I was remiss in not acknowledging the work that Mike Savage had done along with Tony Martin. I know they worked very hard together and were strong voices in the House for a poverty reduction strategy.

When we talk about how much money over how long, I acknowledge that what New Democrats have put forward today is a pragmatic, practical, and feasible solution that is fiscally possible in our current climate. However, is it enough? Absolutely not. I would argue that we need that plan I was talking about and that Tony and Mike had worked on. We need a national act for poverty elimination in this country.

When people talk about how seniors' poverty has been reduced over the years, over the last 30 years it has come down, but the current government can take no credit for this. It came about because of the implementation of the GIS and the CPP.

A couple of decades ago we started to see Canadians receiving their full entitlement under the Canada pension plan. That is when we started to see the poverty rates for seniors start to come down. We have hit the bottom of that curve now and poverty for seniors is starting to trend up again.

I would argue that this is a good first step toward helping seniors live a more dignified life.

• (1550)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate what the member has been speaking about. I have visited her riding as part of the tour I did over two summers ago, visiting 20 communities and listening to seniors.

I think we should try to correct the record here. The previous government speaker talked about the failure to pass the budget and that we voted against it. Let me be clear, there was no vote on the March budget because the government was found in contempt by the House and fell.

It is very significant that the government had pushed that vote to the following week. It knew full well that the motion was going to come before the House on the Friday because the Speaker found a prima facie case of contempt against the government.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right and I am glad he corrected the record. The government did not fall in March on a budget vote. It fell on a vote of non-confidence in the House because of findings of contempt from the committee that had reviewed the matter.

To conclude, I also want to acknowledge the very good work that the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek has done on seniors' issues and pensions. I look forward to hearing more from him later on today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is the member for Ottawa—Orléans rising on a point of order?

Mr. Royal Galipeau: No, Mr. Speaker, I was rising on questions and comments.

Business of Supply

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Sorry, that has concluded, my apologies. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate for some 10 minutes on the important motion that has been introduced by my colleague, the member for London—Fanshawe. The motion, as has been stated, reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, ending seniors' poverty in Canada is fiscally feasible, and, therefore, the House calls on the government to take immediate steps to increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement sufficiently to achieve that goal.

As was mentioned by my colleague, the previous speaker, this issue certainly deserves a lot more money than what we have already proposed. We are talking about a commitment of \$700 million to increase the GIS sufficiently to lift the 200,000 seniors, who are now living below the poverty line, up to and slightly over the poverty line.

It is very modest program, frankly, but it is a practical program. I talked a lot about it on the doorsteps in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour because it is a move forward. We wanted to present that kind of an achievable plan that would actually make a difference in the lives of Canadians. The official figures say 200,000, but according to some estimates there are 250,000 to 300,000 seniors who live below the poverty line.

We have introduced a plan. The NDP has introduced legislation to deal with this matter. We have clearly laid out steps that would achieve this goal, again, a very modest goal, but we have also talked about things like strengthening and expanding the CPP, the Canada pension plan, doing the little things in a very comprehensive way that would make a difference in the lives of seniors. However, every step along the way the government has refused to acknowledge the priority of seniors in the communities of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, and frankly, across this country.

We heard members of the government benches today explain why it was okay to have 6% or 8% of seniors in this country living below the poverty line. We heard them explain why it was good enough to have \$300 million being put into the whole question of lifting seniors out of poverty. It would only deal with a fraction. It has been estimated that would increase some benefits to the tune of \$1.65 a day, and that is somehow good enough.

At the same time the Conservatives are foregoing billions of dollars as a result of corporate tax cuts, and those tax cuts are resulting in hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars staying in bank accounts, and going into the savings and investment accounts of highly paid executives.

It is a question of priorities, and the government's priorities have abandoned seniors. The Conservatives failed to deal with the essential question: are seniors living in dignity? The housing costs, the cost of food, the cost of medications, the cost of being able to live independently are simply out of reach for far too many seniors in this country and in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

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I spoke about these issues as I canvassed throughout the election campaign, not only with seniors but with their children and their grandchildren, who were so frustrated by the fact that their parents and grandparents had contributed so much to their community, had contributed so much to their families, had contributed so much to this country, yet now, because of an inadequate Canada pension plan, because of the inability to have a workplace pension plan, because they worked at home raising children and therefore were not able to participate in the Canada pension plan, those parents and grandparents were suddenly in a situation where they could not afford to make ends meet.

We have heard today my colleagues on this side talk about what that reality is. They talked about seniors in their community who are cutting down their prescription medications and taking them every other day instead of every day, or once a week, and going to food banks to get a decent meal.

• (1555)

I just made a couple of phone calls to food banks in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, which, unfortunately, are serving not only seniors but children and families in the constituency, as they are throughout this country. There are upwards of 7% of adults, in the area of 1,500 to 2,000 seniors, who are attending food banks every month in Nova Scotia. These are seniors who cannot put food on their tables and therefore must use food banks.

A colleague told me today that he was on Elgin Street last night and he ran into a senior citizen who lives in an apartment but does not have enough money left over at the end of the month. This senior citizen was panhandling on the street in order to try to find some money for a hot meal. That is the reality.

When I talk to seniors in my community, it breaks my heart. When I go into some of the apartment buildings and see the conditions in which some of the seniors are living, it breaks my heart. I cannot believe that, in a country as rich as Canada, it is acceptable to have 250,000 seniors living like that, or that it would be adequate to have even one senior citizen living in those kinds of conditions. We have a responsibility to do better.

I appreciate the remarks made about my predecessor, the former member from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, who worked hard on the issue of poverty. I have made a commitment to the people of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, who have given me their trust, to pick up that baton and to continue to raise those issues and to continue to push for those kinds of changes while I have their confidence and while I am here.

One of my colleagues talked about some of the agencies and the volunteers who work with seniors in order to make their lives better. These are seniors who are living at or below the poverty line, those who are living in isolation and those who are not able to afford medication and proper, healthy food. There are organizations, including Campbell's Cole Harbour Senior Citizen Club in my community. I have been there a couple of times for lunch, as I mentioned earlier. It is an organization funded with donations and through the efforts of volunteers.

Aggie, who is 69, is the coordinator of the volunteers who buy the groceries to make meals in the kitchen, which they sell at a

subsidized rate to seniors who, in many cases, would not be able to afford a decent meal each week but they know they can go to the Campbell's Cole Harbour Senior Citizen Club and do that.

The Dartmouth Senior Citizens Service Centre on Ochterloney Street is another facility that gets seniors out of their apartments and is able to pay attention to those people who may not be getting the kind of sustenance they require in order to stay healthy.

That is what is required in their communities, that level of commitment by seniors and by others in the community to help seniors.

I hope all members will support the motion before us today. The least we can do in this country and in this House is to support seniors and ensure they do not live another day in poverty.

• (1600)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate most of what my colleagues have said today. It is unbelievable how many seniors in our communities are living in poverty.

For example, Elliot Lake is basically a retirement community. When my leader came to do a tour, we heard over and over again from seniors that they could not even heat their homes in the wintertime. It is pretty cold in Elliot Lake. One senior was actually living in only one room of his apartment because he could not afford to make ends meet. When the HST came in it was even worse for him.

When we look at this, today 5.8% of Canadians age 65 and older are living in poverty.

Earlier today, a colleague across the way talked about a program that teaches people how to save money and the people were saving \$10 a month. That is only \$120 a year. I know I would not be able to save for my retirement at \$120 a year.

Perhaps my colleague could explain why we are saying that we need to invest in seniors and we need to ensure they are not living in poverty, which is why we need to get rid of corporate tax cuts.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, it is about priorities. Who do we support? Do we care that corporate executives have enough money to buy a second, third or fourth house? Do we want to ensure that investors are able to travel the world in their own private jet? Are we able to ensure that we send billions of dollars back to the United States to the head offices of foreign companies to ensure they are able to continue to do business? Is that where our priorities lie?

We think it should be with seniors. It should be ensuring that seniors can afford their medications, afford a decent meal and afford to live in a safe and comfortable home. Those are the kinds of priorities the New Democratic Party has and that is why this resolution has to be supported.

● (1605)

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I liked the comments made by my colleague, who really emphasized the importance of seniors within our communities and our country, Canada. I would like to ask him the following question.

[English]

One of the extraordinary improvements in this budget that deals directly with seniors is the caregiver tax credit. It is something that allows people to stay at home and take care of a loved one and receive a direct monetary incentive for doing so, something we have never seen before in Canada.

I would just like to hear what the member opposite has to say about that great advance.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, the government has certainly been very adept at helping people who earn enough money. They can afford a tax credit if they are earning enough income.

We are talking about seniors who do not have enough money, who are living on an annual income below \$15,000 a year. We need to understand what that means. It means people who cannot afford to pay for desperately needed drugs, people who cannot afford to put food on their table or have a safe and comfortable place to live. A tax credit does not help those people. The government must understand that.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak today to the NDP motion. In essence, we are talking about the issue of seniors, which is extremely important to all of us.

Canada's seniors have worked hard to build a better country for future generations. Therefore, it is very important during this time that we all work together to ensure that seniors get the benefits they are entitled to and that they do not fall through the cracks.

Since our government came into power in 2006, we have brought in various initiatives to help seniors, giving about \$2.3 billion in targeted tax relief in 2011-12. As well, since this government came into power and addressed the needs of seniors, we now have the lowest rate in the world for seniors in poverty. That is a huge achievement since the time we took over as government when the rates were higher.

In 1999, the rate was 7.9% and today the rate has fallen to 5.8%. However, that does not mean that we do not have much to do. Indeed, we have a lot of things to do. We need to continue working to ensure that no senior lives in poverty.

One of the members who served in the last Parliament said that the opposition did not act on the budget but defeated this government on a vote of confidence. Let me say very clearly that that was a political move by the opposition when it had the numbers. It wanted to play political games and brought in a motion of non-confidence. It was absolutely wrong for the member to say that the Speaker ruled that there was contempt of Parliament. The Speaker said that there was a possibility. However, the opposition played politics and at the end of the day that sent us into an election.

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Everybody has said that they went to the homes of seniors. I have many seniors in my constituency too. When I visited them, they wanted to know why we were having an election and why we were wasting \$300 million for an unnecessary election.

The Canadian public spoke and those who were on this side, more specifically the Liberal Party which was pushing for this so-called vote of confidence and contempt of Parliament, is today sitting at the far end of the House because Canadians have spoken and they gave this government a strong mandate for the next four and a half years to put things in order. That is what those guys forget. It was not what they said in this Parliament. It was what Canadians said through the ballot box. Now they can answer why they wasted \$300 million of taxpayer money.

Some low-income seniors get the guaranteed income supplement and some get CPP. At the end of the day, if the economy is fragile and it is not moving forward, we will not be in a position to help seniors. To help seniors best, we need a strong economy in which they can have a lot of advantages, including the guaranteed income supplement and additional resources. We must not forget that this is in conjunction with our provincial counterparts, which also have programs to ensure that seniors are looked after.

The one thing that is absolutely clear when members speak in Parliament is that we all recognize that seniors have played a very important role in building this country and that it is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that they are taken care of.

● (1610)

However, we just cannot have tunnel vision to take care of them. We need to have vast programs because there are many seniors out there with a lot of different needs. For that, the Government of Canada has brought in a lot of programs. Pension splitting is one program to ensure that seniors keep more money at home. On tax relief, we have freed more than 85,000 seniors from paying taxes. All of these measures go in a small way to help out seniors, to ensure they have more tax-free money in their pockets, to have the freedom to have a lifestyle that they want and deserve.

Of course, at a certain stage in life, there were those who did not contribute to the pension plan in the past, who did not have any other pension available to them. For that, we brought in the OAS and the GIS. In the last budget this government introduced a special supplement to be given to those who are below the poverty line and could not meet their needs, by giving them an additional \$600 per single and \$800-plus for a couple. This was to help them out because that is what we have learned. What did the NDP do? It played a part in the politics that defeated the budget here in the last Parliament.

I am very happy to say that Canadians sent us back and we have re-introduced those measures that could go a long way to help seniors.

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All my colleagues say they go to seniors' homes. We all go to seniors' homes to sit and listen. They vote. Let me say in no uncertain terms that seniors are very intelligent people because they have lessons of life behind them. They know how to make sound decisions. Therefore, it is clearly important that we listen to them, we hear them and we take that in. For that reason, this government introduced a special position of minister of state for seniors. That is very critical, specifically a minister responsible for ensuring that the voices of seniors are heard, and through her at this current time, that reaches the cabinet table and into the government decision-making process. Henceforth, that is a very key element.

I have been here for 14 years and we have been hearing all of those things. However, this government has a clear record of helping seniors, first of course to see that nobody falls down, and those who have fallen down to pick them up and off they go. There is a lot of work to do. I am very proud to say that we have at this time the lowest rate of seniors' poverty in the world. Why do I say that? As parliamentary secretary for foreign affairs I get opportunities to travel around the world representing Canada. As I do, I can say that the situation in other parts of the world is really horrendous for seniors and it is due to a culmination of reasons such as bad economy, bad governance, no social programs and seniors are left to fend for themselves. This is a terrible situation in other parts of the world. However, here, we are fortunate enough in our country that this government worked very hard through listening to seniors and that we have created programs that will ensure that most seniors will get their needs and the things they want.

I am speaking also from experience because my mother is a senior. She receives a lot of the benefits and she tells me without question that if she does not get something, she will wring my head off. It is as simple as ABC. She is my mother and she has all the right to wring my head off. Naturally, I listen to what my mother has to say. She stays in a seniors' home and she is surrounded by seniors. She gets input from seniors as to what kind of programs and what kind of things the government is doing.

• (1615)

As I said, there is a provincial government role as well. So it is important for us that both the provinces and the federal government work together to ensure that the seniors receive the benefits they need.

In many places I have heard about situations where a partner dies and the woman is unable to pay for her house. So she may have to move out of her house. Some of the suggestions are that seniors should have property tax freedom, that they should not be paying property taxes. These are all issues that the provinces and municipalities have to address.

From the point of view of the Government of Canada, the key issue to ensure for seniors is of course the OAS and the GIS. That remains key.

We must also be cognizant that we do not put all of our resources into one area, but that it covers a wider scale of things, to more seniors so that we do not have seniors slipping down as well. That is what the government has done.

Our economy is improving thanks to the excellent management by this government when the world economy was shaken. Because of that we have been able to address many of the concerns.

We are still in a fragile economic recovery. As we heard the Minister of Finance say today, the housing market in the U.S.A is still shaky. The debt crisis in Greece and in the European Union will have a negative impact on this country. If it has a negative impact on this country, of course that means a recession here which means less money to give out to programs.

This is nonsense rhetoric which we saw on the weekend with the NDP trying to decide whether the members want to be socialist or they do not want to be socialist. I am a little surprised that the debate even took place.

The business about our giving tax cuts to corporations or that corporations should not get tax cuts, it does not work that way.

It works in a way to ensure that there the economic conditions develop for businesses to thrive, for a robust economy which would help government coffers, which in turn would help pay for the services that the NDP is talking about and what its motion is about.

Somehow the NDP thinks money is grown on trees, among other things. Remember what the current Liberal who was the former NDP premier of Ontario did to his economy, also in British Columbia and other provinces.

The fact still remains that a robust economy will allow Canada to address the issues that the seniors need to have addressed and to say quite clearly that the government, through sound management, has managed to reduce poverty levels to the lowest one in the whole world.

There is still work to be done and this government will continue doing that work through our Minister of State for Seniors and through ensuring there is a sound economic management of this country which will enable us to meet the needs of the seniors.

• (1620)

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the hon. member's eloquent speech.

A couple of things really strike me and I wanted to bring them up. The government talks a lot about the economy improving and yet seniors cannot seem to reap any of the benefits of this economic expansion. In fact, more and more seniors in my riding of Davenport are living in poverty.

It is nice to hear the government is finally adopting some of the NDP's messaging around seniors. It now says it wants to lift every senior out of poverty. If the government wants to lift every senior out of poverty, then what does it say to seniors in Davenport and right across the country who, in the last election, were asking the question about why the government was giving seniors \$1.65 in its plan and giving the bankers billions?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for listening very carefully to my speech. He is a new member and was listening very carefully, so I thank him very much.

Being a new member, he is saying that we have not done anything for seniors, but I can tell him for the record what this government has done since coming to power in 2006 until now, giving \$2.3 billion in targeted relief to seniors.

As well, and let me just say it one more time, we have the lowest rate of inflation in the world. We have brought it down. This government brought it down. That is quite a significant achievement.

The member should support this budget because there is an increase in this budget for those seniors living on the poverty line of \$600 for single seniors and \$800 for couples. Therefore, I would ask that the member please support this budget so that they can get that money.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always such a pleasure to listen to the member for Calgary East when he addresses the House.

The increase in the GIS initiative undertaken by the government is a half measure. We had this debate on another topic last week. It is a small gesture but will it really play a role? I think that is what we are debating here today.

The member is aware of the study that was undertaken and tabled in the House in November of last year by the Standing Committee on HRSD. During one of the presentations there was much discussion and a number of interventions talking about the guaranteed income supplement, knowing that it is a good tool to use to help those in poverty. Could he comment on what the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives had put forward? The minimum increase that it sought was \$1.2 billion per year, which would increase each GIS by about \$100 per month.

There is a significant gap between what the government did and what was being called for at the time. Does he see that this is a half measure on the part of his government?

• (1625)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, I always welcome questions from my friend on the other side.

It is quite interesting when he talks about the small measures, yet when he was the government opposition, Liberal members voted against every measure that would have helped seniors. One minute they were against it, now he says it is a half measure. That is why Canadians gave us a majority as a strong mandate to ensure that we will do what we have promised to do.

To answer his question, I would ask the member to please support the budget because there is an increase for seniors in this budget, \$600 for a single senior and \$800 for couples.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Calgary East for talking so clearly to the measures that we have taken for seniors and also how important it is.

There are two issues I want to ask him about. I will try to squeeze them into one question.

We hear the opposition talk about corporate tax cuts. I am hoping he can talk about why having a competitive economy is very important for us to be able to do the things we need to do. Also, in

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the last economic action plan, how much was actually spent in support of housing? In my riding we almost doubled support for housing for seniors.

Again, we need to have a strong economy to have that money to do what we need to do. Perhaps he could talk about those issues.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talked about the economy and how if we have a competitive economy the government has the ability to provide the services that are needed.

At the current time, the crisis in Greece very clearly indicates that if we have irresponsible economic policies like those that the NDP is proposing, look at what would happen to our economy. Because the government of Greece cannot provide services to its citizens any longer there are riots in the streets in Greece. Had it exercised sound management policies for its economy, it would have had the money to provide the services that were necessary to help its seniors and everyone else and there would not be rioting in the streets.

This is why we say we need a sound economic management for this country. That is what this government will provide.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we must consider the fact that, in 2010, in urban centres, the maximum payment for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement was less than \$5,039 a year. The increase provided in the budget will only benefit single seniors whose additional income is less than \$2,000 a year, so that makes a total of about \$7,039 a year. I would like my hon. colleague to tell me how a paltry \$50 a month will affect the life of a senior living alone and below the poverty line. Can he tell me how this meagre amount will help them get out of poverty, especially since the 85,000 seniors my colleague mentioned do not pay taxes and therefore cannot benefit from these tax credits? Personally, I do not see how this measly \$50 will help get these seniors out of poverty.

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, as I said, when it comes to giving relief, we need to look at the larger picture to ensure all seniors benefit from this, not just look at the smaller picture.

This government provided \$400 million in affordable housing for low income seniors, aside from providing income splitting and topping up of the GIS. All of this was designed to help seniors stay out of poverty.

We reduced the poverty level from 7.9% in 1999 to 5.8% in 2008. We will continue. The budget provides extra income for that. As our economy produces, we will continue listening to seniors and we will continue to provide relief to them. This government stands on its record, which is a record of doing it and producing it.

• (1630)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the new member of Parliament for Scarborough—Rouge River.

The member just said that the government would be listening to seniors for sure. Sure it will. It will be listening to the growl in their stomachs as they are sitting there in hunger.

Business of Supply

I want to take a moment to recognize the member for London—Fanshawe who has taken over as the critic for seniors. I had the seniors and pensions over the last couple of years, in fact, since 2009, and I am very proud that we are going to have this dynamic woman taking on this challenge. I am looking forward to see the work that will come out of her in the next little while.

The NDP and retirement security is nothing new. In 1927, the labour party of the day forced the Mackenzie King government to bring in old age security because we had Canadians starving across the country. In 1966, NDP Stanley Knowles, again with a Liberal minority, went to the Liberals and said that we needed to have something broader, something in order for every Canadian to have a pension plan. That was the Canada pension plan. It was something that was put forward and passed.

However, we find ourselves today in a crisis. The crisis is the fact that the Canada pension plan going forward will not be effective enough.

However, a more urgent crisis that we have today is that between 250,000 and 300,000 seniors are living clearly below the poverty line. They are living on approximately \$1,162 a month when we combine GIS and OAS. Part of the real tragedy is that most of these people are women, women who had the menial jobs or perhaps never got the chance to line up and get into CPP with the rest of us. It is very troubling.

I have been the critic since 2009, as I said, and I have a number of stories to tell. I had to consider what to talk about here today. I think there is a myth, for lack of a better word. Members will recall that in the recent election plan we were talking about what the NDP thought would be the appropriate thing to do. That was not new at all.

In June 2009, in this House, we passed an opposition day motion unanimously. Everyone voted for it. The number one piece in that motion at the time was \$700 million to raise 250,000 seniors out of poverty.

When we paused to take a look at the half measure, or I would say half of a half measure, because \$700 million over 250,000 to 300,000 people is approximately a \$230 a month increase. The measure we are getting across here is \$50, or \$1.65 a day. In the provinces of Ontario and B.C. that is already eaten up by the HST.

I would have loved to have had the Conservatives listen to us. They voted with us. They gave the impression that they had listened to us. The NDP went across the country. We hear about the solid mandate they have. Guess which caucus tripled in the last election? It is because seniors and Canadians were listening to us. They knew that the number one proposal in our election plan was to increase the GIS to an adequate level for seniors to get them above the poverty line.

I am not going to take any lessons from the member for Calgary West at all on this one.

The opposition day motion that we have put into place has a double purpose. It obviously addresses the short term, the immediacy of the situation of GIS, but the next thing it does is it looks to our future.

We have heard repeatedly in this House that 63% of working Canadians today do not have a pension and do not have savings. Where are we going to be in 35 years? There will be a wall that these people will strike.

It is crucial that this House starts working together to do something to increase the Canada pension plan. We have put forward a proposal that if the employee puts in 2.5% and the employer puts in 2.5%, in 35 years the worker will have a double Canada pension plan.

•(1635)

We have had two disputes in the labour movement just recently, one with Air Canada and the other with Canada Post. In both those instances, they are trying to destroy the defined benefit pension plans. Some of those people have worked for 35 years at those companies. I received an email from one person who was planning to retire in two months from Air Canada with a \$1,600 pension. Had that proposal gone through, he would only have had \$800 to retire, thus he could not retire.

All these stories are coming from the government that seniors will be allowed to work longer. The idea always was that seniors would move to retirement where they could live in dignity and enjoy some time with their spouses from whom they have been away all of their years.

When this attack comes, it will be the responsibility of the government of the day to look to the future. We need to look to the future with an investment. Workers are willing to pay part of that investment. Increasing the Canada pension plan or doubling Canada pension plan will not cost the government one penny. Canadians have always been prepared to pay their way and this is one more time.

We have heard proposals in different places about voluntary types of programs. If workers had money in the bank now, they would have set up their own plans. The reality is that we need to help Canadians focus themselves. I did not look to my future until I was in my fifties, which is a long time ago now, come to think of it, but the reality is that most young people do not. They have these items out there that sparkle so brightly, such as iPads, iPhones or whatever. They invest their time and energy in those. We need to help them as a government. We need to show leadership in this place.

The other thing about the Canada pension plan is that it is totally portable in this country. If there is a downturn in one area, workers are free to move to another area and take that pension plan with them. I really want to stress that today.

I want to come back a little bit, and, Mr. Speaker, you may need to correct me, because I have a tendency to turn to talk to the other side when I know I am supposed to speak through the Speaker, but I cannot help myself because I know there are good people sitting over there. We try to appeal to them with the various stories and things that have happened.

I spent two summers as the critic going to seniors meetings. I attended 40 community meetings, 20 each summer for the last two summers. There are heartrending stories that we hear at those times. I have repeated them before but they still bear repeating today.

Business of Supply

In St. Thomas, a woman had retired, but her husband was two years short of retirement when he had a stroke. He was getting medication. We have all kinds of buzzwords and one of them in the world today is “delisting”. The woman's husband had a \$90 a month prescription that just got delisted by the province of Ontario. She wondered where she could find the \$90, and that was before HST.

Speaking of HST, a woman in Elliott Lake, who I will never forget, said to me, and it is interesting that people like her always take us outside because this is very personal for them, “My hydro bill is \$2,100 a year. They are talking about HST. Where will I find the \$160?” God help that woman. The price of hydro has gone up, plus the HST.

I want to stress the importance of putting aside rhetoric. It is a fact that banks in this country made \$22 billion in profit last year. The fact is that the banks gave \$11 billion in bonuses to their executives. It is shameful. The people on that side of the House can do something about this. They can take moneys like that simply by postponing the tax cuts and they can genuinely work to raise seniors above poverty. I believe that is what this House could do. I look forward to the future of this debate because I know it will be going on for some time.

• (1640)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of years, the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek was the seniors critic and I was fortunate enough to have him come to my riding.

I want to ask him a question specifically about something in my riding. My riding has been a resourced-based riding. The forestry has taken a huge hit. I met with pensioners who were in their seventies and eighties and they had worked for our forestry company for a number of years. All of a sudden it looked like that particular company was teetering on the brink of some severe financial difficulties. The workers were very concerned about the health of their pension. These were men and women in their seventies and eighties. There was no hope for them to go back to work. We saw that happen with Nortel in Ottawa.

I wonder if the member could comment on what he sees is the importance of doubling CPP, as he so ably outlined, and what it would mean to the men and women in our country when the pension plans that they paid into through their employer are suddenly under threat.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for that question because it is a very important situation that it is happening across the country, in every sector. We have had the things happening with Nortel, we have had problems with the steel workers, and problems in a number of places in this country.

The reality is that workers can wake up one morning and have no pension. Some of the forestry companies forgot the fact that this is workers' money. This money is from deferred wages. This money came as a result of workers saying, “We will forego that next raise if you will start giving us \$1 an hour or whatever toward a pension plan so we can retire in dignity”. Instead, as in the case of Nortel, the company had \$6 billion in assets and \$4 billion in cash, and they did not pay long-term disability to people who were disabled. Their pension plan wound up with a loss of 37%. In my riding there was a

man and a woman who were both in their eighties and both had worked for Nortel. In one day they each lost 37% of their pension.

Things must be done beyond what we are talking about today. There has to be pension insurance and there are a number of things we can do.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my honourable colleague for his very kind words and his important contribution to this debate.

He made reference to the fact that the government is working diligently to undercut the pensions of people in the public sector, the Air Canada employees in the private sector, and certainly Canada Post workers. He made reference to defined benefits and defined contributions. Could he explain to people the difference between those two kinds of plans?

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, those of us who handle these files tend to talk inside baseball.

A defined benefit is very simple. Employees agree with the employer that money will be set aside jointly. At the end of the day, when employees are about five years before receiving a pension, they can calculate exactly what they would receive each month. If the market happened to take a downturn, the employer is responsible for making up the difference. Thus, one can count on whatever one is entitled to on a monthly basis.

The difference between defined benefit and defined contribution is quite simple. When employee reach that point in time when they are taking their pension, if there is a downturn in the economy that takes 30% or 40% away as we saw recently, then the employees lose that money and the employer does not have to top it up.

Employers will say that this is an unfunded liability. Guess what? If employers had been funding it in the good times, as they should have been, with no contribution holidays, the funds would be there. We would not have the problem that Air Canada or Canada Post or the other American companies are having. These companies are taking advantage of the situation across this country right now, putting Canadian workers out on the streets.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, The Environment; the hon. member for Random—Buriit—St. George's, Search and Rescue.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to speak to this motion given that over a quarter million seniors are living in poverty today. I also want to articulate the importance of today's youth to be engaged in the dialogue of upholding the standards for today's seniors and for the seniors of the near and distant future.

We are facing crisis today with the number of seniors who are living in poverty. This demands immediate attention. The government has a responsibility to act now to lift every senior out of poverty.

Business of Supply

According to Statistics Canada, almost 300,000 more Ontarians sank into poverty since 2007. Further, Ontario's 17% growth in poverty since 2007 was the highest in the country. Right now, almost 1.7 million Ontarians are living in poverty. There has been an increase in poverty of almost 20% among working-aged adults and a staggering 42% among seniors in Ontario.

I hear the distress and anxiety from my constituents. They are not sure how they are going to pay for the increasing energy and food costs, and the additional taxes on their expenses as a result of the HST.

I remember speaking with an elderly couple who live in the Alton Towers in my riding. They invited me into their home, but they had no heat on. They had one portable space heater that they moved from room to room as they moved. They did not have any of their big lights on in their home. They only had small lamps on. They did not watch TV and had one radio that they used for entertainment. They were doing everything possible, everything they could think of to reduce their consumption in order to reduce their expenditures. I sat with them for about 20 minutes as they went through their bills. They showed me their hydro bills that were consistently getting more and more expensive, and less and less affordable for them with their regular day to day expenses living in the meagre way they were.

Nobody in Canada deserves to be living in these conditions, especially our seniors who have given so much of their lives for us. They have invested into the system for much of their lives only to have to live in such abhorrent conditions. No seniors deserve to be lining up at a food bank in order to feed themselves or to be forced to work well into their retirement years.

Another couple I spoke with on Berner Trail, not too far from where I live, had moved into their modest home as a young couple. They worked very hard and raised their family there. They played by the book and did everything right to be able to enjoy their so-called "golden years". However, now at the ages of 67 and 65, they are looking for work. They are looking for any type of work they can get. The woman is working at the Food Basics by my house as a grocery clerk in order to help pay for their expenses.

A 2009 report on women's poverty from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives stated that low-income rates among senior women remained almost double that of senior men. We know from Statistics Canada that women in Canadian society live longer lives than men.

I am concerned, as everyone in Parliament should be, for all the single senior women in my constituency and in Canada who are going to be left with no choice but to be dependent on food banks and the kindness of local community members. It is very clear from the government's budget that lifting every senior out of poverty is not its priority.

• (1645)

The \$300 million proposed by the government is nice. It sounds like a lot, but it falls short. It sends a clear message about the government's priorities. It would rather give billions of dollars of tax cuts to large corporations, oil companies, big banks or the well-

connected wealthy insiders rather than lift every man and woman who built this country out of poverty.

It is not just the seniors in my constituency who are concerned about the lack of support to lift seniors out of poverty. Many of the working adults, the young families in my constituency, are also worried. They are concerned about how they are going to be able to afford to help their mother or father have a dignified quality of life as their current OAS or GIS payments do not go very far.

Since the financial support is not enough for their parent or parents to live on their own, these young families are bringing their elderly parents into their homes to care for them. The costs of nursing homes or retirement homes are way beyond the reach of the people who live in my constituency. They cannot afford it. They are very concerned about the additional financial stress as family caregivers when they are already just scraping by on their own.

The seniors I spoke with during the morning walking club at the Malvern Mall tell me of their experiences of living with their children. They tell me how they feel like a huge burden on their children and feel guilty about turning to their children for support on all matters. They do not want to be so dependent on their family members but do not really have a choice and spend as much time as possible at the mall so as not to be in the way of their children's lives. They do not want to feel like a burden.

We owe our seniors so much more than this. We owe our seniors so much more than for them to feel like burdens.

We in the NDP proposed a \$700 million increase to the guaranteed income supplement, an investment that would allow our seniors to live a decent quality of life. It would have lifted every senior out of poverty. This support would take the worry off our families and allow our seniors a retirement with dignity and financial security.

However, as we know, the Conservative government has agreed to spend only \$300 million, not even half. Other members in the House have said this is a half measure. It is actually less than a half measure. I guess it is okay for the Conservative government to lift three-sevenths or 40% of seniors out of poverty, or to lift every senior 40% out of poverty. But still 300,000 seniors are living below the poverty line. Once again, we owe our seniors much more than this.

A recent report by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy stated that the increase in senior poverty was largely due to the deteriorating position of single elderly women, whose poverty rate jumped from 14.5% in 2007 to 17.1% in 2008. That was over one year.

The federal old age security, the OAS, and the GIS assure a basic level of income for these seniors. The Conservative government displays a bipolar approach to the help that it provides to Canadian seniors. One of its policies has marginally helped low-income seniors, only 40% of them like I mentioned before, and the other helps the wealthy.

In their maiden budget in 2005 the Conservatives announced a modest improvement to the GIS for low-income seniors. I thought there might be a glimpse of hope, but very quickly they made a 180 degree turn in the treatment of our seniors by the changes to the tax system.

Some Conservative members across the way speak about their income splitting plans and how good they are. But studies show that pension income splitting does absolutely nothing to help single seniors or even the poorest elderly couples who pay no tax.

• (1650)

Racialized and lower-income youth today have difficulty accessing post-secondary education because of the barriers to education, financially and otherwise. We know that they need good post-secondary education to acquire any type of good job. If our youth today do not get good jobs, they will be unable to save for their future and more and more people will continue to retire in poverty.

• (1655)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my NDP colleague.

We know that the Conservatives want to give tax credits. They have already given a number of tax credits to big corporations, oil companies and banks.

I would like my colleague to talk about how the Conservatives' and the NDP's priorities differ. We know that the Conservatives are going to purchase F-35 jets that will cost billions of dollars. Would it be possible to do something else with that money and to change priorities to help seniors who are living in poverty?

[English]

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. It clearly will help me articulate the difference in the priorities of the NDP, which are to ensure that it is lifting every senior out of poverty, supporting families, investing in health care and education to help all Canadians rather than just oil companies, big banks, buying fighter jets and building prisons. The NDP's priority is to help every family move ahead rather than just well-connected insiders.

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening very carefully to what my friends in the opposition parties have been saying all day today in the House. It is really perplexing to me, as I am sure it is to many members and Canadians right across the country, that our friends in the NDP and the Liberal Party feel that the lower tax plan, which has created over 580,000 jobs in the last couple of years, and the many measures in the budget for seniors are two different things and are totally exclusive. There was no mention whatsoever about the fact that this is the largest GIS increase in decades for seniors. They voted against that. There have been 85,000 taken off the tax rolls.

I am very curious as to why the NDP continues to vote against the measures in our economic action plan from which many Canadians and seniors across the country have benefited. Clearly, on May 2, Canadians gave us the mandate to proceed with the next phase of our economic action plan. In my riding of Richmond Hill the majority of

seniors voted overwhelmingly to support the Conservative Party and the next phase of the economic action plan.

Why does the NDP continue to vote against the very thing that it is speaking about, and that is help for seniors all across Canada?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the member says the Conservatives this time around got a clear mandate when 4.5 million Canadians voted for an NDP government whereas only 4.9 million voted for the Conservatives. Four hundred thousand more Canadians do not make a clear mandate.

The engine behind my campaign in Scarborough—Rouge River was the youth and seniors in my community. They believe in the plan, platform, ideas and principles for which the NDP stands. They know we were the only party that showed a clear commitment to lifting seniors out of poverty. That is why 4.5 million Canadians voted to support the NDP this time around.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we debate the issue within the House, I first want to thank my colleagues for giving me this opportunity. I also thank the preceding speakers. One of the benefits of talking later in the day is the opportunity to collect bits of information from everybody and then try to articulate as best we can.

I have heard some of the debates. I have heard some very off-the-wall comments, certainly about seniors' poverty. I have also heard some comments that deal with topics other than seniors and poverty, as we sometimes get off track here and start talking about those typical lines we use. It seems like some people are still in campaign mode. Nonetheless, it makes the issue very important.

Everybody has that one essential story, or maybe two or three stories, that encapsulates what it is we try to do here, that we ensure that in a country as great as this, the most vulnerable in society do not slip through the cracks. We want to ensure that those people we identify as completely impoverished do not fall through the system, although we know people do. We see them everyday in our positions, whether we are in the bureaucracy or we are in elected office on any of the three levels. Therefore, we come to the House and bring these stories with us. I am glad to hear a lot of those stories coming out today. That is why I congratulate the preceding speakers.

The motion states:

That, in the opinion of the House, ending seniors' poverty in Canada is fiscally feasible, and, therefore, the House calls on the government to take immediate steps to increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement sufficiently to achieve that goal.

To lift the vulnerable of our seniors out of poverty requires the payment that is strategically invested in the GIS, that guaranteed income supplement. It is a wonderful piece of machinery, the third pillar of seniors' pay that is so essential across the country. We have the old age security, the Canada pension plan and now the guaranteed income supplement.

Business of Supply

Back in 2005, when I had been elected for only about a year at that point, I remember one of the initiatives we put in place was a strategy for a home heating energy rebate. A lot of people forget that. I have tried to push the government into reconsidering bringing that back. It was in January and it was a heating rebate that was given to recipients of the GIS. For many of the people in my area, and certainly across the country, it allowed people to get over the hump of Christmas and the holiday season, when heating bills are the highest, whether it be through hydro, wood, oil or natural gas.

This is the type of strategic measure that interests me the most because it is one of those initiatives that allows the people who are most vulnerable to stay within their means and in their own homes.

Earlier today, I was talking about a charity that was set up in Toronto and it is called "Share the Warmth". It is a fantastic little charity that provides energy credits for the most vulnerable to avoid homelessness. One of the things it stated was that over the years, the median age of the recipient was getting much higher, say from the 1980s through the 1990s and into this decade.

The baby boomer surge that is running through the system is now making its presence felt here, even in this debate as we talk about the guaranteed income supplement. However, the issue is all the facets of government investing into bringing people out of poverty. The energy rebate is just one. The guaranteed income supplement that seems to be the king we are dealing with is the one measure that is most talked about. It is the one measure that got most of the attention during the campaign simply because it was the one that was most desirable.

Interestingly enough, sometimes when we debate, we get caught up into the minutiae of the language we use. I noticed earlier that, if I am not mistaken and a simple nod from the opposite will suffice, I believe those members are supporting this motion.

However, one of the things the motion says is "ending seniors' poverty is fiscally feasible and therefore, the House calls on the government to take immediate steps to increase the guaranteed income supplement". The Conservatives are agreeing with it because they feel they have just gone through this measure.

• (1700)

However, the problem is that every study we have seen puts that dollar value to lift all seniors out of the poverty level at \$700 million, at least. What we witnessed in the budget was less than half of that, which leads us to believe one of two things. First is denial. Second is there is more money coming. I like to think the second option is coming, but I really have my doubts.

I want to congratulate the mover of this motion. This is certainly a good time to have this debate, given the fact that we are now into, as I mentioned earlier, the area of our population growth that is burgeoning, around that age level between 60 and upwards towards 80.

I want to go back to couple of other issues. Two years ago I brought a private member's bill to the House. What I noticed was a lot of seniors were very worried, not just about the amount of money that was available, but their ability to budget.

I spoke to a group in Newfoundland and Labrador. It was the umbrella organization for all the seniors' groups. We had a very interesting meeting about the things that seniors needed, those certain measures, those small investments that would make a big difference in the lives of a seniors.

They talked about new horizons, educating them for computer training, allowing them to download pictures of the grandkids, allowing them to take the bus, discounts, whether it be tax credits or not, but discounts were a big one, and payment of utilities. For instance, if people lose a connection to the basic utilities, the reconnection fee is incredibly expensive. Therefore, seniors were looking for major discounts or even a wiping out of the reconnection fees for those who had reached a certain age. I thought that was a great idea, and it is something with which the government could get involved.

The other issue was that every senior, whether he or she was receiving CPP, old age security or guaranteed income supplement, gets paid once a month. Seniors told me that without an increase, they would like to have the option of bi-weekly payments.

We brought in a private member's bill. Now I have heard the government does not support that as of today. I hope, at some point down the road, it will support it. This is one of the greatest listening exercises that we can engage in, and that is with the most vulnerable in society and certainly for seniors who are most vulnerable.

In my riding of 193 communities, the median age is around 56. Therefore, to say that this issue means a lot to me in my position is probably the understatement of the day, certainly by me.

I think about the people in my riding and about all that I have gone through, all that I have seen, all that I have witnessed. People are in desperate need and do not know where to go. We have become the place, whether it is at the federal level or the provincial level, where the most desperate come to, yet we are locked into these departments and these payment programs. We cannot do anything because we would have to change the legislation.

A lot of the seniors in my area are turning to the churches as an act of desperation. To be quite honest, the churches are doing good work to ensure these people are connected to the avenues by which they are able to receive help. I have been here seven years and in the past four years the churches in my area, the Salvation Army, the catholic church and the Pentecostal assemblies, have been on the forefront of providing the most basic assistance.

What is wrong with that picture? The picture shows that we need to get out there more. We need to have a debate that is germane to the situation, something that is relevant, something that is tangible to the most vulnerable seniors.

If there is one thing I noticed in the past while, it is we just have not become tangible to seniors as a place for help, assistance and information. However, at least with motions like this, we can go a long way to alleviating that.

Business of Supply

• (1705)

I hope that through programs like the GIS, CPP and OAS we will be able to do a lot more, but the very basic issue is that \$700 million investment to bring that large bulk of people out of the poverty level. That is what has been agreed upon, but for some reason we get caught up in the argument of whether that is enough or this is enough, if this is the right number and that is not. I have heard many people say that the money is not available so therefore we have to be more prudent.

That was last year's excuse. This year all of a sudden it becomes a good thing to do. I heard many government members today say that we just had an election which therefore delayed the payment of the \$300 million. If the \$300 million meant so much to the government today or before the election, why did it not do this four years ago?

The Conservatives have been in power since 2006. There was a time when there was no recession. When they came into power in 2006 I remember quite well that we were flush with a surplus. We were able to forecast surpluses out for a good six or seven years. Then things turned south. Yet at the time just before the recession hit that \$300 million was never mentioned.

At least all members of the House have pushed the point. I will not be specific to any particular party, but we feel the need for raising our most vulnerable out of the poverty level as I mentioned earlier.

Just poring over some of the facts when we talk about pension plans, two years ago the largest employer in my riding at the time was AbitibiBowater, a mill that existed for over 100 years. It had what was called the direct benefit plan. Quite frankly, with the closure of the mill last year, that plan is sustaining a large part of the community in which I live. That is right. That DB plan that people villainized is sustaining communities as we speak. Would a direct contribution plan do that much for the most vulnerable communities? There is not a chance.

The world is changing. Finances are changing. Companies are moving away from this. We cannot legislate them to go back. Nonetheless, as government, we have that responsibility to step in and give people choices.

In that particular situation, the solvency ratio was poor with AbitibiBowater. Two years ago it was at 71%. Trouble was ahead. Had it closed out, wound up that account, people would have ended up with 71% of their pension, which still was only a fraction of what they were earning when they were working full-time. It would have been devastating. It has rebounded somewhat, but what can we do to fix that?

We can make better laws. One of my colleagues in the NDP brought in Bill C-501, An Act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act (termination and severance pay). The bill itself had some problems, but it had a great principle in mind, which was that the most vulnerable should line up to get attention first.

The companies pay a whole assortment of people when they finish, yet the most vulnerable always end up on the bottom part of that formula. We have to work to get that the other way around and we can do that with the right discussion, the right debate and the right legislation. It is time for all members in the House, from

whatever party colour one wishes to put out there, it is a decent debate to be had. The most vulnerable would be the recipients of what it is we are paid to do, which is to discuss, debate and enact.

Some of the statistics we heard earlier today are that upwards of over 70% of the people do not have a pension outside of what is guaranteed through the old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. It is a staggering figure.

One of the issues that I brought up earlier, which we brought up during the campaign and one that I think is a good idea was discussed ad nauseam in Great Britain about a decade ago. It is called a supplementary CPP.

• (1710)

It is the component of a voluntary payment to top up people's CPP to allow them to receive greater payments once they reach the age of 65, or 60, if they choose to do so.

However, the one element of that supplemental CPP that I thought was very important in the changing dynamics of this world, of this country and of our communities, is the fact that it was a portable mechanism for taking a pension that is not vested into one entity, not one company, but people could take it with them as they travelled throughout their working career. No matter what company people went with they could take this pension they have invested in and move it with them.

When I fly back and forth from Newfoundland to Ottawa, there are a tremendous amount of people I see each and every week, or biweekly, who go to the oil fields, primarily in Alberta, some in Saskatchewan. I worry. They make good salaries, but where they do invest for their future, for their retirement? It is all over the place, I am not really sure and I am very worried about it. If we do not worry about these things, we will find that our children and grandchildren will have to deal with that discrepancy much like we are dealing with now.

Will direct benefit plans exist at that point? I really have my doubts. As much as I do not want to say it, it looks like it just might happen that way, given the current trends toward direct contribution. I have no great qualms with RRSPs, RRIFs and these type of investments, but the issue is that it does not always provide that steady income that we think it is going to provide.

I would implore anyone to see a financial advisor. I have never been an insurance salesman and I am not the one to advocate for the industry, but I have talked to financial advisors and they provide good advice. However, not everybody does that. So, we have GIS and old age security. That is the backdrop, that is the very backbone by which people have to survive if they have nothing else to rely on.

Business of Supply

Why can we not provide that bar, why can we not reach the bar that was set to bring everybody, virtually all these people, out of the poverty level? That is what the \$700 million is about. It is not just a round number that is pulled out of the air, as was insinuated by some people in the House. It is a number that represents the greatest investment in impoverished seniors in this country probably in the last 50 years, because we have that responsibility. It does not matter if people line themselves up with a particular ideology. We have to admit that if people are poor, if they are vulnerable and if they are desperate, where is their ideology then? It means absolutely nothing. If that happens, if more people fall below that line, then we, as parliamentarians, squandered a fantastic opportunity to invest in the most vulnerable. As members will recall, the most vulnerable of seniors invested in us many years ago.

How many people in this House can actually say that they are here inspired by our seniors today? Everyone can. Who cannot? No matter whether they are uncles, aunts, mothers, fathers, grandparents, friends, next-door neighbours. Do we not owe them, at the very least, an investment in the basic income support of that \$700 million, not \$100 million, not \$300 million, but \$700 million? That is the story behind this \$700 million investment. That is why I support this motion. That is why we need to have more debates on motions just like this.

• (1715)

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague's speech was very focused and well thought out.

I noted that there are programs to help wipe out the reconnection fees that many individuals who are seniors and those who are impoverished have to face. Would it not be great if we actually had a system in place like the GIS or OAS that provided enough income for seniors so that they would not have to worry about making their monthly payments? They are missing payments right now because they do not get enough money.

Too many seniors are come into my office holding their hydro or heating bill in one hand, but say that they need money in the other hand to buy food. They have to make those choices. In our economy, in our country, that is uncalled for. I would like to hear the member's comments on that.

• (1720)

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Sudbury and I share the same attitude and he brings up a valid point.

How does that happen to people who worked all their life, garnered wealth, raised children, afforded a home and a car or two? There are so many people in that middle income bracket who find themselves not able to afford the basic utilities. How does it happen that people who are secure at a point in their lives becomes vulnerable?

The difference between going from comfortable to vulnerable can be very thin. We see it every day. For people who get serious diseases, drug coverage can be crippling. It is astounding how much is being paid for just basic drugs these days.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy the interventions from the member for Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor and I thank him for his contribution to the debate today.

The member asked a rhetorical question. He asked why we did not get these measures for seniors four years ago when we first became government.

I would like to remind him that the reason it did not happen earlier is because we were busy employing other measures. For example, there was a total of \$2.3 billion in targeted tax measures that took about 85,000 seniors off the tax rolls, we doubled the pension income credit, reduced the minimum registered retirement income fund withdrawal by 25%, increased the age limit for registered retirement savings plans and so on. Those are measures of about \$2.3 billion to help seniors. The measure that the member is talking about will help about 680,000 of our most vulnerable seniors. When he asked why we did not get this done four years ago, I think that is a plausible answer.

I would like to ask the member why, 13 years prior when the Liberal Party, his party, was in power it did not get it done? This increase in the GIS that we put forward in budget 2011 is actually the largest increase in 25 years. Perhaps the member could address why Liberals did not get it done?

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I cannot deny the fact that the increases were there back then as well, but if he wants to brag about the fact this is the largest one in 25 years, I will concede the point.

Since the member brought up the targeted measures of over \$2 billion, some of the measures he spoke of basically provide a small measure of comfort across the middle class level but do not dig down deep enough into what one would call the most impoverished within our society.

I will give him credit that this is the largest increase in 25 years, there is no doubt about it. Instead of condemning what has been done, I will raise the bar. Perhaps I was too hasty to say that the government should have done it before because it seems to be a political quip that we use too much. Therefore, I will credit his government for the \$300 million increase and I will raise him another \$400 million.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the status of women has been a priority for me for over 30 years, not only because I am a woman, but also because we are talking about at least half our population. In Quebec, for seniors living in low-income housing—I am talking about Quebec because that is where I live—as soon as they get the slightest little increase, 25% of that increase goes toward the increase in their rent. If a person gets an extra \$600, then 25% of that amount goes toward his or her cost of housing. That does not leave much for groceries or personal items.

Again, women are the poorest because often, women who are in their 40s or 50s today will be taking care of their aged parents. They will leave their jobs and sometimes lose their jobs. They will end up poor when they retire because they will not have worked long enough to accumulate a respectable income to have a decent retirement. I want to see this motion adopted.

• (1725)

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, this issue is very important for Newfoundland and Labrador and also for Quebec.

[*English*]

The member brings up a good point. The most vulnerable would be women in that age group.

I just dealt with a situation last week involving a woman who had to take care of her ailing parents. The only income support she had was through government means at a very low level.

Some people save RRSPs and when they withdraw from their RRSPs, their old age security and GIS are decreased. It seems like we have put ourselves in a situation where people in one lot improve themselves but people in the other lot do not.

The reason why I bring this up is because it seems that women are most vulnerable in this situation. They are predominantly the caregivers, at least for parents in the riding I am from. As a result of that, the most vulnerable get looked over very quickly. They are not as loud as others. In many cases, they are left on the hook to look after their parents in a very vulnerable situation.

The parents could have incredibly large drug expenses or incredibly large housing expenses. There is no housing available in communities that are isolated. They stay in the home that they have lived in for 50 years. It is not easy to heat these large homes. When the parents do not have the ability to heat these buildings, the responsibility falls on the children and the children in this particular situation cannot go to government agencies because they just do not qualify. The most important thing we should do goes back to the very motion we are debating today, and that is provide a level of income support to the people who actually own the home and the most vulnerable, those seniors.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a quick question so the record is clear to me and I did not misunderstand anything that the member said. He said \$700 million would be sufficient to bring all seniors out of poverty. Is that his accurate statement? The reason I ask is because our costing is about \$2 billion, so we see a discrepancy in costing of about \$1.3 billion. I just want to clarify that for the record. I wonder if the member could speak to that. Is he sufficiently satisfied that \$700 million would bring all seniors out of poverty?

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives puts it at a shade over \$1 billion. Other groups, certainly labour groups, have put it at about \$750 million. Either number is nowhere near the \$2 billion that I am hearing from the other side. Therefore, I will stick to my original intent which is to say that I will take \$700 million over \$300 million any day.

• (1730)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague from Sudbury.

The primary role of Canada's retirement income system is to provide older Canadians with adequate and stable income in retirement. All of us together in this House cannot absolutely abandon our seniors who worked hard to build this country, so I am urging everyone to support this motion.

Business of Supply

Ending seniors' poverty in Canada is fiscally feasible and the government can take immediate steps to increase the GIS sufficiently to achieve that goal. It is feasible for the government to lift every single Canadian out of poverty. It just requires a will to do so.

One senior living in poverty is one too many, yet we have hundreds of thousands of seniors struggling to make ends meet. The low-income rate is considerably higher, as we have heard from other members, for unattached seniors. Single seniors are more likely to experience low-income, and senior women living on their own are more likely than their male counterparts to live in poverty. As members all know, women also tend to live longer so we spend a longer time in poverty.

The average before tax income for seniors living in poverty ranges from \$14,700 to \$22,000. For singles, the average before tax income ranges from \$11,550 to \$16,900. I would challenge every member in this House to build a budget that would cover rent, utilities, food, and transportation, and then see if there is one penny left over to visit friends for a cup of coffee.

Of those who fall into the poverty bracket, seniors are the least likely of all age groups to move back out of it. Once in the poverty frame, they tend to spend the rest of their lives in that frame. And let me say that even if they go to work at Tim Hortons or anywhere else where they can get a few hours of work, they are still living in poverty.

Being in a low-income bracket on a continuous and ongoing basis has negative implications that go way beyond not being able to make ends meet. It has implications on one's health. It has implications on how long one will live. It has implications on one's quality of life. And we know that it has an effect on how seniors begin to view themselves. It lowers their self-esteem.

Our seniors are victims of systemic poverty and that systemic poverty can only be addressed by people sitting in this esteemed House. I would urge all of us to do so.

From 2003 to 2007, one in six seniors, which is 16%, was in the persistently low-income group over the whole period. Shame on us. The most vulnerable in the group, of course, are senior women. Women make up about 70% of poor seniors. This motion will directly help senior women living in poverty, and in particular some of the most vulnerable in our society, our aboriginal women.

Poverty among seniors has a crippling effect on visible minorities as well. In 2010, based on the census, 65% of single visible minority seniors were considered low-income seniors compared to 39% of single seniors who were not a visible minority. We have to and we can address this. Among couples, the low-income rate was 15.7% for visible minorities. Once again, shame on us.

Business of Supply

My riding of Newton—North Delta is a wonderfully culturally diverse one and these figures are particularly concerning to the aging people in our community. We have seniors who, even though they qualified to become Canadian citizens, do not qualify to receive pensions because they happen to come from particular countries. Those seniors are living well below the poverty line, totally dependent on their children. One can imagine how those seniors feel, at 75 or 80 years of age, having to live like that.

● (1735)

The OECD reported that OAS plus GIS bring households to about 90% of the poverty thresholds they have calculated for Canada. The government can raise the GIS to the after tax low-income cutoff and it has the budget to do so. It just needs the will. I urge colleagues sitting across the way that as they go to sleep tonight, they find the will to do so.

The budget provides for a federal policy framework for the aerospace industry, billions of dollars, but not a comprehensive approach to poverty. Even the increase to the guaranteed income supplement is only \$50 to \$70 extra a month for our poorest seniors. It is just not enough.

Activity limitations are among the most important factors affecting a person's quality of life and the possibility of full participation in our society. We all value our independence. It is an important concern for seniors. It implies the ability to perform daily activities for oneself. Research has shown a strong positive relationship between self-perceived health and the potential to carry out daily activities without limitation or dependence on others. When I talk about dependency and independence, I am talking about financial independence as well because financial dependence can be just as crippling as physical dependence on someone else.

There are indeed indications that dependence on others actually reduces the quality of life and there is research to support that. Canadian seniors deserve independence. I know that is what I would want for myself and if I want that for me, my parents and grandparents, then every single Canadian deserves the same.

Our seniors are not asking for a lot. Countless times, as I canvassed door-to-door, seniors told me their heart-rending stories. One of them actually said to me, "All I want to be able to do is pay my bills and just have a little left over so I can buy a small gift for my grandson". That story made me cry and I thought what a terrible state we had forced our seniors citizens into.

While visiting a seniors' home in my riding, an elderly gentleman said that after he had paid for his assisted living, he did not even have enough money left to go out for a cup of coffee. Another senior couple told me that they have a beautiful car sitting in the driveway, that they can now no longer afford to fill it with gas to visit their members and friends, and they are feeling lonelier and more isolated every day. We can do this.

Armine Yalnizyan from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives stated:

In a nation as affluent as ours, seniors' poverty doesn't have to exist at all. Based on what seniors already get out of public policy, we can afford to help. We don't have to spend more. We just have to spend it differently.

She went on to say we have to take money from one part of the budget and reallocate it.

The motion put forward by the member for London—Fanshawe targets the most vulnerable seniors in our country. If the budget passes as is, the additional money will not bring seniors out of poverty. The government measures will not lift even half of the seniors out of poverty. There are hundreds and thousands of seniors living in poverty and we need to help them today.

This motion is about dignity. This motion is about independence. This motion is about quality of life. If we can lift every Canadian senior out of poverty, let us do it. My appeal is to colleagues in the House, every single one of us. Let us not abandon our seniors. Let us work together now and lift seniors out of poverty. Together we can do it. They need us and are counting on us. Let us make sure we deliver.

● (1740)

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is not insensitive to seniors. As a brand new member of Parliament, I want to assure everyone that when I campaigned, seniors' issues were first and foremost.

As a result of actions by the Conservative government since 2006, seniors and pensioners will receive about \$2.3 billion in additional targeted tax relief in 2011-12. This includes increasing the age credit by \$1,000 twice, benefiting 2.2 million seniors, doubling the pension income credit to \$2,000, introducing pension income splitting, and increasing the age limit for the registered retirement savings plan from 69 to 71 years of age.

I would ask the member opposite, why have none of these initiatives been supported by her party?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, this is not about a litany of things we have done. This is about what our seniors need today. I could say he did this, she did that or they did that. I do not want to go there. We are giving billions of dollars to banks and big corporations in tax breaks, which have already had lots of those, and yet we do not say that we do not have the money to do that. We are giving billions of dollars to oil companies, which made the biggest profits last year, and we are not saying that we do not have the money. Yet when it comes to our most vulnerable citizens, the ones who built this country, we are bringing up history books.

Colleagues, let us turn our heads to what really matters. These are citizens who are struggling and who are counting on us. Do not turn your back on our own parents and grandparents, their friends and others like them who built this country. Vote yes and vote for our seniors citizens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we continue to the next question or comment, just a subtle reminder to members to address their comments to the Chair, to the Speaker. That keeps our discussions in a good vein.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the hon. member, because I like the juxtaposition between the two elements here, the corporate tax breaks and the GIS. I did not bring it up in my speech because I felt that it had probably been used way too much, but I think the member pointed me in the right direction. Maybe we should talk about it, because when it comes to corporate tax cuts, it has always seemingly been a race to the bottom: Who can deliver the lowest tax cut in a particular jurisdiction. I believe Ireland had the same of attitude, and we know how that worked out.

I want the hon. member to comment on that, because I want her to discuss how priorities are what are at stake here and not the exact numbers. That is what that \$700 million means: It is a priority investment in the impoverished.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, it absolutely is about priorities. That is why we are here.

Canadians elect us as parliamentarians because they trust us to come here and look after their interests. If we do not pay attention to priorities and to what Canadians value, then we betray that trust.

Right now we are betraying hundreds and thousands of seniors who built this province. My mother is close to 84. I see other senior citizens who are struggling. At the same time they are struggling to put food on their tables and pay their bills, we continue to race to the bottom, to give the most money to the biggest corporations, the biggest banks and biggest oil companies, that are making the biggest profits in our history. Why? Because it is about priorities.

I often hear my esteemed colleagues across the aisle talk about the value of families. Well, our seniors are members of our families. If they are members of our families and Canadians are a family, then we have to look after our senior citizens.

Please, I urge all hon. members to vote yes and let us say we are about families and mean it.

• (1745)

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today and speak in the House. I hope the Speaker will indulge me for one minute, as this is my first speech in the House, although I have been up many times to ask questions since the House resumed.

I would just like to take a minute to say thanks to the folks in my great riding of Sudbury. I like to round numbers up, so that even if it was 49.9% of the vote that I received, I will say that 50% of the electorate saw fit to put me back in this fantastic place and to be their voice. I want to thank them for that, but ultimately and truly I have to thank my family: my wife Yolanda; my daughter Trinity who is seven; and my daughter Thea who is three. Both of them were great billboards for me during the last election. Also, I would like to thank my father. He is 97 years old. He was 56 when I was born, and so seniors' issues have always been near and dear to my heart. Also, I do have to mention my mother. Although she passed away a year and a half ago, she is always in my heart and reminds me of issues that we need to talk about in this House.

With that, I would like to reflect on what we are talking about today. I look at the motion:

Business of Supply

That, in the opinion of this House, ending seniors' poverty in Canada is fiscally feasible, and, therefore, the House calls on the government to take immediate steps to increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement sufficiently to achieve that goal.

I think the important word there is sufficiently". We need to ensure that when we are talking about ending seniors' poverty, we are not talking about a little off here and a little off there. What is needed right now is \$700 million to take every single senior in our country out of poverty, and it can be done. It truly can be done. If we are looking at the priorities the government is bringing forward right now, we could easily find \$700 million to ensure every single senior gets out of poverty.

The first one that comes to mind for me is the corporate tax cuts. My colleague talked earlier about how we have talked about this ad nauseam at some points. However, when the banks made \$20 billion in profits last year and we are giving them \$840 million in tax breaks, we could take every single senior out of poverty with the latter and have \$140 million left to look at other issues of poverty. We need to start putting our priorities in the right place. Canadians and Canadian seniors should be at the top of our priority list. Right now, if we are looking at gaps, we can see that poverty among seniors particularly affects minorities and women.

In 2000, based on the census, 65% of single visible-minority seniors were considered to have low incomes compared to 39% of single seniors who were not. Among couples, the low-income rate was 15.7% for visible minorities and only 5.6% for the rest. The rate of poverty among female seniors is double the rate of male poverty.

Unfortunately, I can think of too many times when I was going door to door this last election and over the two and a half years prior to that when I had single female seniors coming into my office or talking to me at the door about how proud they were that they were able to work and to do something for their children and grandchildren, but that over the last six months to a year life had become completely unaffordable for them. That is when the tears started to well up in their eyes.

I know every single one of us, no matter what colour our tie is, no matter what party we come from, has had those conversations with seniors. Each and every one of us wants to do what is right for these seniors. What is right is ensuring we can find that \$700 million to take every single senior out of poverty. There is no reason that a senior citizen has to choose between eating and rent, between paying a bill and having a home to live in. If that is the kind of country we are letting our seniors face, it is absolutely shameful.

As I mentioned earlier, my father is 97 years old. I come from a different background in terms of family heritage, because I have seen the work my family has done in building our great country and contributing to the economy. That goes right across our country.

Business of Supply

• (1750)

What does that say about where we are going, if we overlook and deny seniors the right to live and retire in dignity? If they are having to contemplate buying dog or cat food to get protein, that is not retiring in dignity. We need to ensure that seniors are living above the poverty line. We parliamentarians can do that.

One of the files I have been working on over the last two and a half years is credit card interest rates and credit card debt. Seniors, unfortunately, are falling into that cycle, because they do not have enough to survive on right now. They are taking from Peter to give to Paul. Hopefully, I have not offended any Peters or Pauls in making that statement.

What these seniors are doing is that they are actually taking money they do not necessarily have, using it put food on their table or to pay a bill, and then make a minimum payment so they can get through that month. That is sad because slowly the credit card companies are inching their way and starting to take away what little income they have.

I have had thousands of emails from families and seniors, people right across the country, about what these credit card companies are doing. Let me just reiterate, if a senior makes \$18,000 a year in pension, he or she should not qualify for a credit card with a \$30,000 limit. That is what the credit card companies are giving to some of these seniors. If the seniors say no to them, then they lose the right to have that access.

What ends up happening is that seniors use the credit cards to survive or to buy their grandchildren a gift or, but most of the time it is to put food on their table. The credit card companies are now coming in and taking away property, taking away things, because these seniors have had to use credit cards to survive. That is shameful.

Once again, let us establish a system to ensure that no senior lives below the poverty line.

One of the things that seniors actually have to spend their money on is medications. What we as New Democrats have been talking about for a long time is the creation of a national pharmacare program. If we establish this to lower the costs of medication and to equalize the availability of prescription drugs for seniors across the country, they would have more money in their pocket. More money in their pocket would allow them to actually buy the gifts, put food on their table, whatever they needed to do with their money.

Right now we are not seeing that. We are not even seeing the government contemplating such a program. We would like to encourage the government to look at that, because such a system would actually save Canadians billions of dollars on an annual basis, as the strains on our hospital system and family doctors created by the lack of access to affordable prescriptions would be alleviated.

What we are seeing right now are the priorities of the government. We talked about the corporate tax cuts and seniors struggling to get by. I think seniors see this as more insult to injury.

We have heard about the billions being spent on unnecessary fighter jets. We do not even know the full cost of each yet. I think two or three of those fighter jets would absolutely take every single

senior in this country out of poverty. It goes right back to what our priorities are.

A \$700 million investment, I think, would be the first investment, the first step that we need to make to ensure that seniors are out of poverty or above the poverty line. It would go a long way toward ensuring that we as parliamentarians recognized and respected the work that our seniors have done for our country.

I do not think any one of us will ever forget our seniors and the great work they do.

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech. I appreciate his feeling of gratitude, which he expressed so well. It is good for all Parliamentarians to hear.

• (1755)

[English]

I have a question arising from the member's speech and the preceding one. Many times we have heard from the opposition benches about the tax breaks we are giving corporations, those job-creators that have propelled us to the number one place in the western world in terms of economic recovery.

I would like the members to make the distinction between giving money to job-creators and not taking away money by increasing taxes. It is the low tax regime that has attracted many of these investors and allowed us to create some 570,000 or more jobs since July 2009. There is a difference.

I would like the member opposite to acknowledge that difference, if he will.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, I helped the member's economy this past weekend because I visited West Vancouver when I was at the convention.

In relation to the member's question about corporate tax cuts, I think my hon. colleague missed the fact that we are talking about priorities here and our priorities are ensuring that Canadian seniors do not live in poverty.

We can put it any way we like. We can say it is giving, it is a decision or it is an implementation but at the end of the day the big banks paid \$840 million less. They made \$20 billion in profits. What we are saying is that the banks should not be given corporate tax breaks. Seniors should be given \$700 million to get them out of poverty. Let us move on with solving poverty right across the country.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I was very moved by the speech by the hon. member for Sudbury.

The member spoke about pharmaceutical drugs and their prices. Has the official opposition looked at the efficacy and the inadequacies of registration for prescription drugs. Recently it was drawn to my attention, through a therapeutics initiative in British Columbia, that 150,000 North Americans die every year using prescription drugs as prescribed, that we are not using enough of an evidence-based approach and that we should be concerned about seniors being overmedicated.

I wonder if the hon. member has a view on this.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, in relation to the specifics, it would be best to defer that to the critic for health in our party.

However, in relation to overmedication of seniors and some of the problems that we are seeing when it relates to seniors, I believe one of our colleagues from the Conservative bench wrote a book about the subject. I have also had the opportunity of working in the field of supporting individuals with developmental handicaps who were also seniors. What we have seen in many instances is overmedication and the over-medication results in them going to the hospital.

I spoke earlier about those costs and the implication that those costs have on our health care system. If we actually had a national pharmacare program, those dollars could be saved so that we could ensure that seniors have more money in their pockets, because that is the motion that we are speaking to today.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Sudbury also comes from a city where often the people in his community are reliant upon a resource-based industry. In my own riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, forestry is an important part of our economy, or it has been up until the last few years.

I wonder if he would comment on the fact that we see many of these private sector pensions being under attack as companies go into bankruptcy and what he sees as the important role for government on that.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, in Sudbury, we had one of the most devastating strikes in, I think, our country's history where we had Vale and Local 6500 on strike for a year, most of it over defined benefits and defined pensions.

It is one of those things that we need to start prioritizing. We keep using that word on this side of the House but prioritizing to ensure that our seniors have the opportunity to retire in dignity. There are too many seniors right now actually having to go back to work underground because their pensions are inadequate. That is shameful.

* * *

● (1800)

POINTS OF ORDER

MARITIME HELICOPTERS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier today, I noted that Sikorsky had confirmed that it is on track to deliver 28 fully functional maritime helicopters on schedule starting in June this year.

Business of Supply

To be clear, Sikorsky has confirmed that it is on track to deliver the 28 fully functional maritime helicopters on schedule starting in June 2012.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—POVERTY OF SENIORS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Hon. Alice Wong (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will address the issue raised by the hon. member of London—Fanshawe in regard to ending seniors' poverty.

As the hon. Minister of State for seniors, I am pleased to say that we have already taken action to address this serious issue in budget 2011. That is why we will support this motion today.

The hon. member suggests that we increase the guaranteed income supplement. We have increased the guaranteed income supplement in budget 2011, which we tabled earlier this month.

I would also like to correct the member on some other facts.

With the strong mandate the Canadians have given us, we are using the next phase of the economic action plan to not only enhance the GIS but also the new horizons for seniors program.

We are also working for seniors to ensure the strength of the retirement income system by introducing a new family caregiver tax credit. In fact, when asked about these measures, CARP's vice-president of advocacy said that its members were, "happy" and "thrilled that these issues—are being mentioned" in the budget.

I would like to go back and discuss the issue, which, in my opinion, is the most important news for seniors in budget 2011, the boost to the guaranteed income supplement. This increase will directly help those seniors who rely exclusively or almost exclusively on federal benefits. This includes many senior women and singles with inadequate incomes.

Budget 2011 measures will provide a new annual top-up benefit of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This will improve the financial security of more than 680,000 seniors across Canada. It will help the most vulnerable seniors. This is a significant investment into our seniors population despite the government's tight fiscal situation that will see us balance our budget by fiscal year 2014-15.

However, do not take my word for it. Let us hear what some key stakeholders have to say about our 2011 budget commitments following the initial tabling of the budget.

The C.D. Howe Institute said:

...the new Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) top-up benefit for low-income seniors, would bring a meaningful increase in benefits too low-income seniors.

Both the Service Employees International Union and the Canadian Labour Congress stated in press releases that the guaranteed income supplement increase "is a win for every senior living in poverty in Canada".

We are providing the largest GIS increase in a quarter century to the lowest income seniors who need it most. This makes sense.

Business of Supply

However, the GIS increase is only one of the many ways our government is helping seniors preserve their standards of living.

Canada's seniors have worked hard to build a better country and our government believes they deserve a secure and dignified retirement.

Furthermore, Canadians are living longer, healthier lives than people in past generations. Therefore, helping Canadians prepare for and achieve financial security in their later years is a priority of our government.

It goes back to the very beginning of our mandate when we created the portfolio of minister for seniors so that older people could have a stronger voice at the cabinet table.

Since 2007, our government has made life better for Canadian seniors through a number of programs and initiatives. In fact, it was our government who introduced pension income splitting and doubled the pension income credit. We have lowered taxes and removed 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls completely. We also raised the GIS exemption, putting more money in the pockets of 1.6 million more seniors.

What did the opposition do? It voted against all of those measures. If the opposition truly intends to help seniors, it would have voted for our budget.

Speaking of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, we will do even more.

●(1805)

As minister for seniors, I am happy to say that budget 2011 has good news for older Canadians. In budget 2011, we introduced new measures to improve the financial security of Canada's seniors, to expand their opportunities and to enhance their quality of life.

I have already mentioned that Canadians are living longer than people in past generations and they are naturally concerned about financial security after they retire.

It is important to point out that we have a strong public pension system. This year, Canadian's will receive \$70 billion in benefits through the Canada pension plan, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, or what we call GIS. Over the years, GIS has been a major factor in reducing poverty among Canadian seniors but it is not the only factor and it is not the only area where we are making things better.

Our government also wants to improve federally regulated private pension plans. We are now working with the provinces to introduce new private pension options, such as the pooled registered pension plan. These plans would benefit millions of Canadians who have not had access to this kind of coverage before, such as employees of small and medium-sized businesses and self-employed workers.

We are helping seniors hang on to more of their hard-earned money. As a result of measures introduced by this government, seniors and pensioners will receive about \$2.3 billion in targeted tax relief in the 2011-12 fiscal year.

There are many seniors who are not quite ready to draw a pension. The National Seniors Council has found that many seniors are

staying on the job where they continue to share their wealth of knowledge and experience. For those seniors who want to keep working, we are changing the rules to eliminate the mandatory retirement age for most federally regulated employees.

We are also extending the targeted initiative for older workers for another two years. This initiative helps older workers who have been laid off from their jobs to retrain for new careers.

All of those measures are helping seniors financially. They are all anti-poverty measures. In fact, the incidence of poverty among seniors in Canada has dropped from a rate of 21% in 1980 to less than 6% in 2008. That is one of the lowest rates in the world.

That is not all. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan builds on commitments to seniors made in previous budgets. These commitments include \$13 million over three years in budget 2008 to help combat elder abuse, of which the most prevalent form is financial abuse. By helping seniors protect themselves from financial abuse, we are protecting their incomes and savings, and that is an anti-poverty measure.

In a previous budget, we also committed \$400 million over two years for the construction of new housing units for low income seniors, and that is an anti-poverty measure because it allows older people to find decent homes at a rent they can afford.

We are also introducing general measures to help Canadian families financially that will also benefit seniors.

Caring for an infirm dependent relative can be really expensive. That is why we are introducing a new family caregiver tax credit. In addition, we are removing the limit on the amount of eligible expenses that caregivers can claim under the medical expense tax credit in regard to their financially dependent relatives. For the first time, the definition of caregiver has been expanded to include spouses and common-law partners. Many seniors are acting as caregivers and these measures will relieve some of their burden.

Seniors are also major beneficiaries of the broad-based tax relief measures that our government has introduced and other financial measures, such as the tax free savings account.

Again I would like to point out to members of the House that these measures are directly or indirectly anti-poverty measures.

The interests of older Canadians are becoming more important as seniors make up an increasingly larger proportion of our population.

Financial security is obviously important to seniors, as it is to all Canadians. It is essential to meeting the challenges and enjoying the opportunities that come with getting older. Our government will continue to do its part to ensure that security.

●(1810)

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was interested in some of the things my colleague said, so I have two questions.

First, if the budget of the government is so tight, if it is so concerned about measures to reduce spending, why is it still giving corporate tax cuts to profitable corporations? Why is there \$840 million for the banks and \$35 billion for jets built in the United States, but only \$1.65 a day for a single senior?

Second, if she thinks that expanded pensions are so good, that this private pooled pension is so great, then why not expand the CPP and make it adequate so people can have a decent and dignified retirement?

Hon. Alice Wong: Mr. Speaker, the most important thing is to speak to the seniors directly and also speak to the major stakeholders.

I am happy to report to the House that I have already spoken to the vice-president of CARP and had a meaningful conversation. In fact, I will be meeting her soon in Toronto, face to face, to listen to her client's voices.

I am also very proud to report to the House that I have already met seniors face to face. I have spoken to the stakeholders in B.C. over the past few days. I look forward to meeting the president of the National Seniors Council later this week. As well, I look forward to meeting the ministers from the provinces and territories for seniors. We will definitely come to very good solutions to better improve the lives of seniors.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was a very serious issue that affected senior's income not long ago. For those senior citizens who decide to withdraw their registered retirement income funds to respond to a housing crisis, emergency home repairs, emergency medical assistance, or anything else, the government decided on May 17, 2010 that they would lose their GIS benefits. Consequentially, they would also lose their drug cards and other provincial benefits tied to the GIS.

When this was brought to the floor of the House, the government said that it would amend its decision and prevent that from happening. This required a change to the Old Age Security Act.

Will the minister of state commit today that her government will immediately bring in amendments to the Old Age Security Act to ensure that senior citizens, should they withdraw their RRIFs, would not lose their GIS benefits as a result of a loss of optioning?

Hon. Alice Wong: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Revenue has already addressed the issue, so I will not comment further on it.

However, I will be meeting the provincial and territorial ministers at the end of this month. We will be discussing a lot of issues that will be related directly to the territories and provinces.

• (1815)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and the recorded division is deemed to have been demanded and deferred until Tuesday, June 21, 2011, at the end of government orders.

Adjournment Proceedings

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask the Conservative government to be true to its word. The Conservatives claim to care about a stable government with stable policies, and as somebody who has worked a lot with small businesses, I understand that. Small businesses and individuals are worried about stable business conditions because they are worried about liquidity.

I am rising today to ask the Conservative government to help itself, to accept the suggestion from this side of the House from a couple of Liberal Party MPs to provide stability in a particular program, the eco-energy retrofit program for homes.

I will talk a bit about the eco-energy retrofit program. It encourages homeowners to do energy audits of their homes. These energy audits are done by trained professionals. The result of these energy audits give the homeowners information about how to invest a dollar in energy retrofits and how to get the most benefit from each dollar invested. For example, it will tell homeowners that they should invest in insulation in their houses first, or that they really need to fix particular windows and that will give them great value for their money. It helps homeowners save dollars in their homes at the same time as they save energy and also usually reducing their greenhouse gas emissions.

I am speaking today on behalf of businesses, small businesses which are, for example, energy auditors, renewable energy companies, businesses that will come and insulate, or seal homes or provide heating and air conditioning. These businesses have been affected by the Conservative government's policies with respect to the eco-energy retrofit program for homes.

This program was killed in 2006 when the Conservatives took power. It was restarted about a year later and then it was allowed to run out last year. It was reinstated in budget 2011, but only for one year. The problem is a small business owner cannot run that small business when the policy changes. It is cancelled and brought back, cancelled and brought back.

Adjournment Proceedings

I have had personal experience working with some of these small businesses, which were reeling from this change in policies. The government, the members opposite, recognize that this is a good program. It helps people save money and it saves energy. The best way to save money is to reduce waste. I know the government is in favour of reducing waste. This program helps reduce the wastage of energy.

Members of the Liberal Party ask the government to commit to a stable five year eco-energy retrofit program for homes. This is good for small businesses, good for homeowners and good for the environment.

Will the government be true to its words and support stability, stable policies and commit to a five year eco-energy retrofit program for homes?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a delight to be here addressing this issue one more time. This program has been very successful and well used by Canadians. I should run through a more complete history than the member opposite did.

This program was announced in January of 2007 and \$160 million was put toward it. In March of 2009, under the economic action plan, we provided another \$300 million to help an additional estimated 200,000 homeowners with the eco-energy retrofit homes program. Then again, in December 2009, the program received an additional \$200 million and in 2010 another \$80 million. This year, we have again provided \$400 million for the 2011-12 retrofit homes program.

I want to thank the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands for inquiring about our government's eco-energy retrofit homes program. Canadians have certainly utilized this program. It is a pleasure for me to discuss just how popular this energy efficiency program continues to be.

Thousands more homeowners, because of the \$400 million we put in this year, will be provided financial help to make their homes more energy efficient and reduce their energy costs. The popularity of this program is remarkable. It has been highly significant for the environment and local economies right across Canada.

Since it was launched about five years ago, over 500,000 Canadian homeowners have applied to the program. They have received grants up to \$5,000 each. I believe the average has been about \$1,400 or \$1,500 on those grants. They cover a wide range of improvements, things like home insulation, more efficient heating, energy-saving windows and doors, those kinds of things.

On average, when they are done, homeowners are saving approximately 20% per year on their energy bills. It is clear the program is helping to clean up our environment and it is saving Canadian homeowners money at the same time. Communities across Canada are obviously benefiting from this as well. It has provided much needed business stimuli and job creation as people upgrade their homes.

It is estimated that this program has generated more than \$7.5 billion in economic activity since it began. As one of our government's clean energy initiatives, the program is part of a

comprehensive approach to improve Canada's competitiveness and to ensure that we continue to be a leader in green job creation.

I should point out that since 2006 our government has committed more than \$10 billion to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to build a more sustainable environment through investments in green infrastructure, energy efficiency, clean energy technologies, and the production of cleaner energy and fuels.

For these reasons, the eco-energy retrofit homes program continues and we are pleased that the program has been extended to the end of this fiscal year.

• (1820)

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, I agree very much with what my hon. colleague has said. It is a great program. I like it. I have worked with companies that love it. However, imagine that I am a small business and I see that this program is going to be extended for just a year. I am going to have trouble hiring good people because I might be able to hire them for only a year due to not knowing whether this program is going to last more than a year. It has a history of being cancelled and brought back.

My real question is this. Why does the government not help itself by helping small business? He would really be helping his own government and the reputation of its stability by providing the benefits that come with stability and simply guaranteeing that this program lasts a number of years instead of just one. The member opposite would be helping his own party by making that commitment.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, we have certainly helped Canadians and we will continue to do that in a variety of ways. Another way we do that, as the member opposite mentioned, is reducing waste. It is incumbent upon us to ensure efficiencies in the programs and that we review them from time to time. We did that with this program and brought it back for this year.

We set some very aggressive targets, such as the greenhouse gas emissions target. We want to reduce them by 17% below 2005 levels by 2020. We are doing this through a variety of ways, through a new clean energy industry. Natural Resources Canada of course is playing a key role in those efforts and that includes delivering several of these eco-energy initiatives, among them the home retrofit program.

I should point out that we are doing much more than that under the economic action plan. We are supporting a number of other things. We have invested \$87 million in research and development, and demonstrations of clean energy, \$86 million for clean energy regulatory actions, and another \$40 million over two years for sustainable development technology. We are doing our part to change the environment in this country.

• (1825)

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak once again to the closure of the maritime sub-centre in St. John's and of course the centre as well in Quebec City. At this point in time, my concern is that we cannot seem to get across to the Government of Canada how important that sub-centre is to the lives of people who spend much of their time at sea, whether we are talking about sailors, fishers, or people who just use the sea for pleasure, or oil workers, for instance.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, we have a very risky environment for anyone who goes to sea. We have been trying to tell the minister responsible for fisheries and oceans and the Prime Minister and anyone else who will listen that to continue down the path of closing that sub-centre is going to mean much more harm to people. We have said time and again that the people working in the sub-centre really need to know Newfoundland and Labrador. They really need to know the island portion of our province in particular and be familiar with all of that part of our country in order to do justice to serve the needs of people who use the sea for travelling or for whatever purpose.

I know that many fishers and many oil workers who go to sea to earn a living cannot even imagine not being able to access a safety centre that is within their own area, within St. John's. Remember that the 12 people who work in that centre have worked there for quite some time and know only too well all of the area around Newfoundland and Labrador. The minute people call in an SOS, or the minute people say they are in danger, all they have to do is say where. The 12 individuals who work in that centre know exactly where they are, exactly how to reach them and they know the best thing to do.

Just as an example, a call came in this past Saturday. Three fishermen were stranded on a rock ledge in Labrador, their small boat swallowed by rough seas. The people in the centre did not have to spend time looking at nautical charts because they knew exactly when the call came in where these people were stranded and knew exactly what to do.

Another example of what has happened at sea that I would think would make the government think twice about its decision, was the crash of the Cougar helicopter where we lost 17 lives. The Wells inquiry was undertaken at that time and one of its recommendations was to enhance safety, not diminish it.

So, here we are after all of that has taken place and now we see safety being diminished because once we move the responsibility for safety from that centre to Halifax, or to Nova Scotia, or to Trenton, Ontario, we are going to end up with people who are less knowledgeable about the area and less knowledgeable about the risky environment in which people work from day-to-day. That is a serious issue for those of us who are familiar with the centre itself and with the 12 individuals who work there.

Apart from the safety aspect, which is crucial, we are also talking about the loss of jobs. We are talking about the loss of very capable individuals who can do the best service that needs to be done in protecting those who spend their time at sea.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the issue raised by my colleague from Random—Burin—St. George's regarding the consolidation of the St. John's sub-centre with the joint rescue coordination centre in Halifax.

Let me begin by reassuring my colleague and indeed all Canadians that when it comes to Canadian Coast Guard and search and rescue activities, safety is our number one priority. We would not put this measure in place unless we were confident it could be implemented seamlessly and safely. As the coast guard motto says "Safety First, Service Always".

The main point I wanted to make is that the decision to consolidate was a careful decision made on the recommendation of the Canadian Coast Guard and it will not compromise the on-water response time.

There are three joint rescue coordination centres across the country, in Halifax, Trenton and Victoria. They handle all search and rescue tasking for both the Canadian Forces and Coast Guard. In addition to the three joint centres, 35 years ago two sub-centres were established in Quebec City and St. John's.

At the time the sub-centres served an important purpose in their day, before the advent of new technology. In fact, as Canadian Forces Lieutenant-Colonel John Blakeley has stated:

We've just reached a point where technology allows us to do everything out of the three main joint rescue communication centres.

By transferring resources to the joint centres, it will make it easier for the Coast Guard to work more closely with its Canadian Forces partners by locating all maritime and air search and rescue coordinators in the same centres.

The Coast Guard's maritime search and rescue coordinators will continue to organize rescues by gathering all information available about the persons in distress, as well as the positions of potential assisting resources in the area of an incident.

It goes without saying that the rescue centres will continue to be operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and staffed by Canadian Forces and Canadian Coast Guard personnel who are thoroughly trained to evaluate various situations and send the most effective resources to deal with a particular incident.

We will continue to ensure that local knowledge and expertise are embedded in the tools and training of the crews, mariners and Coast Guard employees. Let me say again that the response on the water will not change. The officers, helicopters and vessels, including the two heavy icebreakers that were recently moved to the St. John's area, will remain in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our government received a strong mandate from Canadians last month to govern responsibly and to respect taxpayers' dollars. As part of a routine review, the Coast Guard identified this duplication of service as an area of inefficiency. It is the government's responsibility to ensure that the money Canadians entrust to us is spent well and wisely. It is our government's responsibility to ensure that our economy recovers from the economic downturn.

Adjournment Proceedings

The move to consolidate our search and rescue operations out of the three existing joint centres is sound, both operationally and fiscally. Aeronautical and marine search and rescue services will continue to be performed in the excellent way Canadians have come to expect. In fact, as already stated, as we facilitate coordination by working more closely with our Canadian Forces partners within one joint centre, services may actually be improved and at the same time we are saving money for Canadians.

Let me conclude by reaffirming the commitment of Fisheries and Oceans Canada to ensuring the safety of the maritime community in Newfoundland and Labrador and in the rest of Canada.

• (1830)

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, I have to respond with disbelief at some of the commentary just made by my hon. colleague, to suggest that this is a way of saving dollars and of becoming much more efficient.

This is about safety. If the government wants to save dollars, it should look at cabinet, look at the size of cabinet and the fact that it has increased. An increase in the size of cabinet means an increase in the expenditures.

If the government wants to save money, it should not, for heaven's sake, look at safety issues. It is the same issue as when the government wanted to de-staff the lighthouses. The government said it was going to automate lighthouses and was going to get rid of the people who were there.

It was the wrong decision and the government, in its wisdom, after some outcry and some representation on behalf of those who travel on the sea who made the point that it cannot be done because it is not

the same as having a set of eyes, having a human there versus having an automated lighthouse.

I am going to ask the government once again to reconsider this decision, just the way it did with the manned lighthouses.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, contrary to some of the statements that have been made, the safety of Canadians will not be compromised by the consolidation of the two sub-centres into the existing joint rescue coordination centre.

This consolidation will make it easier for the Coast Guard to work more closely with its Canadian Forces partners. The consolidation will also have no impact on the level of search and rescue response services delivered to Canadians. I think that we would agree that is the bottom line.

We are a government that listens. When forming government in 2006, the Coast Guard made us very much aware of its significant needs for capital investment. We responded with over \$1.4 billion in investment. We are supporting the Coast Guard.

Very careful thought was given to this decision. There will be the same level of capacity on the water. Local knowledge will be used in search and rescue coordination. Service will continue to be available in both official languages.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:34 p.m.)

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CANADA



House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 146 • NUMBER 012 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, June 21, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 21, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1005)

[English]

PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Privacy Commissioner on the Application of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act for the year 2010.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this document is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

* * *

[English]

SENATE REFORM ACT

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-7, An Act respecting the selection of senators and amending the Constitution Act, 1867 in respect of Senate term limits.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as co-chair of the Canada-China Parliamentary Association and pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the reports of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-China Legislative Association respecting its participation to the co-chair's annual visit to China held in Beijing, Xining, Lhasa and Chengdu, People's Republic of China, April 1 to 11, 2010; and the 13th bilateral meeting held in Beijing, Tianjin, Nanjing, Changshu and Shanghai, People's Republic of China, September 9 to 19, 2010; and the co-chair's annual visit to China held in Beijing, Chongqing, Dali and Kunming, People's Republic of China, March 11 to 19, 2011.

I am also pleased to present the reports of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-China Legislative Association and the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary group respecting its participation to the 17th annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum, the APPF, held in Vientiane, Laos, January 11 to 15, 2009, the 30th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, AIPA, held in Pattaya City, Chonburi, Thailand, August 2 to 8, 2009; and the 31st General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, AIPA, held in Hanoi, Vietnam, September 19 to 25, 2010.

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[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-235, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (failure to inform).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to introduce this bill, which would amend the Criminal Code to make it an offence not to report to the authorities instances of sexual or physical abuse of a child. This is a small bill that has only a few clauses. I hope that all of my colleagues here who want to protect children will support this bill.

This bill would make it an offence to fail or neglect to inform the police or social services of a situation in which someone has reasonable grounds to believe that a child is being sexually or physically abused.

I believe that we all have the responsibility to protect the children in our society, and if we do not do so, if we remain silent or look away, we are just as guilty as the individual committing the crime. I urge all of my colleagues to support this bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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[English]

PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA ACT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-236, An Act to amend the Public Health Agency of Canada Act (National Alzheimer Office).

She said: Mr. Speaker, my bill, an act to establish a national Alzheimer's office within the Public Health Agency of Canada, aims to reduce the rising tide of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in Canada.

Routine Proceedings

The bill calls for the office to develop a national plan to address dementia in conjunction with the provincial and territorial health departments with special goals and an annual report to Parliament; take necessary measures to accelerate the discovery and development of treatments that would prevent, halt or reverse the course of dementia; encourage greater investment in all areas of dementia research; coordinate with international bodies to continue the fight against dementia globally and to build on Canada's existing contributions in this field; assess and disseminate best practices; improving the quality of life of people with dementia and their caregivers; and make recommendations to support and strengthen Canada's dementia care workforce.

I hope all hon. members will support the bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

● (1010)

FISHERIES ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-237, An Act to amend the Fisheries Act (deposit in lakes).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I always remind the House that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is just that, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, not the minister of mining or agriculture or forestry. The number one job of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is the protection of fish and fish habitat. When we allow mining companies to perfectly destroy a healthy aquatic system that is wrong.

What this bill would do is stop mining companies from using lakes as tailing ponds. If they wish to have their activities they need to do what they did in the past, which is set up independent tailing ponds free and clear of any freshwater aquatic systems that, in any way, destroy the actual habitat of fisheries in this country, because that simply cannot be going on any more.

This bill, hopefully, will be accepted by all members of the House in order to protect fish and fish habitat now and in the future.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-238, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (in-home care of relatives)

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill is one I have been introducing now since 1997 when one of my constituents actually had to purchase an awful lot of equipment for his dying wife. He was told to institutionalize her but he said, "No. If she is going to die she is going to stay in her own home". The doctor told him the various things that he would require, which were an additional tub, oxygen measures, different types of food, et cetera. When he tried to claim those on his taxes, many of those items were not tax deductible.

If he had put her as a ward of the state, the cost to the government would have been a tremendous amount of money. He could not understand why he could not claim some of these things to provide care for his wife.

This bill would remedy that. If people have a dying relative in their home, they should be able to claim what is required as a tax deduction to prevent the person from becoming institutionalized.

This would allow people who are in the dying phases of their lives to at least die in their own homes with a sense of dignity. It would also allow caregivers to deduct the equipment and purchases that they require in order to make a dying person's life more comfortable at the end.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-239, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (peace officers)

He said: Mr. Speaker, I hope the justice minister is aware of this particular one because one of the things that offends me greatly is the lack of respect for our police officers and men and women in uniform.

What this particular bill would do is that when someone commits a crime of murder against one of our peace officers, he or she should be held to the maximum extent that the law requires, which is 25 years without a chance of parole. We may even want to think about making it longer because when one takes the life of a peace officer whose duty is to protect us and our families, that is something that I, personally, and I know that many members of Parliament from all sides, simply cannot accept.

I am hoping that the justice minister will actually take this bill and maybe make it a government bill in order to move it forward to ensure that our peace officers get the respect that they deserve.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

TAX ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-240, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (services to a charity or public authority)

He said: Mr. Speaker, when people make a donation of some kind to a charity, they get a taxable receipt. However, if they provide services to that charity it is not necessarily tax deductible.

*Routine Proceedings***SURVIVOR'S ANNUAL ALLOWANCE ACT**

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-243, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act, the Judges Act, the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act, the Public Service Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, as a married man, you know this all too well. What happens, and pray it never happens, if a wife passes away when the husband is 54 years old? If the husband remarries at age 58, for example, lives for 20 years and then dies, the second spouse gets the pension.

However, if that husband had the audacity to remarry at age 60, live for 20 years and then pass away, his second spouse gets zero. That is called the gold digger clause. Some people call it the Anna Nicole clause. It has been around since the Boar War. The British government was worried about young women marrying older veterans for their pensions.

I have a lot of Camp Hill veterans that say that if young girls want to marry them, they have time, so those young girls should come on over and marry them.

The reality is that it should not be up to the government to tell people who they remarry and when. The last surviving spouse should be entitled to the pension. We should not put it at age 60. It is discriminatory. It needs to change. This is something that affects all federal public servants, including ourselves, throughout the entire country.

We would hope that all members of Parliament, even if it is for self-respect, will get this done. When we lose a loved one, it is a terrible day, but if we have the good fortune to love again and remarry and live out our final years before we pass away, our second spouse should not be abandoned.

We are hoping the bill will pass very quickly to get rid of the marriage after 60 act, which is what the bill hopes to do.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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**ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS VISITING MILITARY
MEMORIAL SITES ABROAD ACT**

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-244, An Act to propose and examine a program giving financial assistance to high-school students visiting military memorial sites abroad.

What I am trying to do in this bill is to say that if people provide various services in kind for a charitable organization then the services that they render should be tax deductible. For example, people may lend their car to a Lion's Club so that its members can drive a person to a medical appointment. That vehicle saves them a lot of time, money and effort and the owners should be able to deduct some of those services that they have rendered in kind for tax deductible purposes. That would encourage more people in the future to give not only their cash but also their time.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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CANADIAN BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-241, An Act to amend the Canadian Bill of Rights (right to housing).

He said: Mr. Speaker, all of us know what it is like to have a home, to have shelter where we feel safe and secure and where our families and our neighbours are safe and secure. Can anyone imagine not having a home?

We were just in Vancouver where we were told that on any given day there are 50,000 people on the streets. In Canada, right across the country, there could be well over 100,000 people without shelter. Shelter in this country should be a constitutional right. Every Canadian citizen should have access to shelter, be it an apartment, a condo, a house or whatever, but they should have a right to safe, affordable and secure housing.

We would like to amend the Constitution by ensuring that this definitely becomes a constitutional right of all Canadian citizens.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

● (1015)

CANADIAN FORCES SUPERANNUATION ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-242, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act (increase of allowance for survivors and children).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this comes right out of the Royal Canadian Legion playbook, to be completely frank, and all the veterans organizations.

When a veteran or RCMP member dies, his or her spouse gets 50% of his or her pension. I wonder if everybody in this room or average Canadians could live on 50% of their salary tomorrow.

My bill asks for an increase to survivor benefits according to the Royal Canadian Legion mandate and other veterans organizations. We would hope to get very speedy passage on this one because the survivors who looked after our heroes are the ones who now need looking after. They require a little bit more income near the retirement stage of their lives or that of their children.

We are hoping the bill will be passed very quickly.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, anybody who has had the opportunity to travel overseas and see the great sites of our heroes in France, Belgium, Hong Kong, and Italy knows what a moving experience that really is. Unfortunately, an awful lot of Canadians do not get that opportunity.

This bill would encourage the federal government to work with the provinces, territories, schools, municipalities, aboriginal groups, et cetera, so that in the lifetime of a student, he or she would get at least one opportunity to travel overseas to walk the grounds of those cemeteries where our war dead are buried.

We have 118,000 Canadians who have passed on fighting for our country, buried in over 70 countries around the world. What a great thing it would be for Canadians to have at least an opportunity during their school life to visit these gravesites.

I believe this could be encouraged by working co-operatively to find the resources. By working with other sectors, as well as the private sector, we could allow for every student, at least once in their student life, an opportunity to visit our heroes who had fallen in other countries.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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● (1020)

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-245, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (expenses incurred by caregivers).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I could not help but notice that the Conservatives have adopted some aspects of this bill in their budget. However, in typical fashion, they never go far enough.

This bill would expand the expenses provided for caregivers to allow them to assist and give of their time when they care for someone who is under palliative care or rehabilitation services. It would also allow those individuals time off work to provide that care.

Imagine a child diagnosed with cancer and only six months to live. What are those parents prepared to do? They would take time off work and care for their child during the last six months. If they could not afford to take time off work, they may lose their job, so not only would they suffer the loss of a child but they would suffer financially as well.

We simply do not think people should go through that alone. This bill would provide assistance with some of the costs in caring for an individual in their final stages of life or in severe rehabilitation services.

We hope that this bill and all the others, which are some of the finest pieces of legislation ever to grace the floor of the House of Commons, get passed all bundled together very quickly.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

PETITIONS**NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions signed by constituents of my riding.

The first petition states that over 200,000 civilians were killed in the first atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 with tens of thousands of additional human beings severely injured. However, there are over 27,000 nuclear weapons that still exist today. Of the 26,000 nuclear weapons held by the United States and Russia, 3,000 are on a 15-minute warning launch status and threaten to destroy us.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to establish a department of peace to reinvigorate Canada's role as a global peacebuilder and seek the abolition of nuclear weapons as a top priority.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition talks about a review of NATO's nuclear weapons policy and the fact that over 25,000 nuclear weapons are at risk of accidental or intentional use.

Canada is a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The International Court of Justice in July 1996 determined that the use and threat of nuclear weapons is, for all practical purposes, contrary to international law. However, NATO states still rely on policies involving nuclear weapons for their defence.

The petitioners encourage the Government of Canada to call for an urgent review of NATO's nuclear weapons policy to ensure that all NATO states fulfill their obligations to renegotiate and conclude an agreement for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are some people who deserve our utmost admiration. One such person is Marie-Hélène Dubé, who is known to my colleagues. She started a petition calling for changes to section 12(3) of the Employment Insurance Act, which provides for a maximum of 15 weeks of benefits in the event of illness. This aspect of the law has not been amended since 1971. We believe it should be changed from 15 weeks of benefits to 52 weeks. It is not right that a person suffering from cancer only has 15 weeks of benefits.

On behalf of more than 75,000 petitioners, I am presenting this petition and urging the government to take note of it because we have had many petitions from the beginning. I presented a petition with 30,000 signatures about the same issue last March, and it is time something was done about this.

* * *

● (1025)

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Madam Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

RESUMPTION AND CONTINUATION OF POSTAL SERVICES LEGISLATION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, a bill in the name of the Minister of Labour, entitled An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services, shall be disposed of as follows: (a) commencing when the said bill is read a first time and concluding when the said bill is read a third time, the House shall not adjourn except pursuant to a motion proposed by a Minister of the Crown; (b) the said bill may be read twice or thrice in one sitting; (c) after being read a second time, the said bill shall be referred to a Committee of the Whole; and (d) during consideration of the said bill, no division shall be deferred.

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, just weeks ago our government indicated in the Speech from the Throne that our priority remains focused on jobs and growth. We also noted that the global economy remains fragile and risks to our recovery persist.

After many months of collective bargaining and mediation, a labour dispute between Canada Post and more than 50,000 employees representing the Canadian Union of Postal Workers urban operations unit has resulted in work stoppage, an event that, if unresolved, could jeopardize Canada's economic prosperity.

Canadians gave this government a strong mandate to complete our economic recovery. It is my view that the Government of Canada must take decisive action now before further damage is done to our economy.

Our government introduced Bill C-6, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services. The measures in this proposed legislation are in response to an extraordinary situation facing Canadian families, workers and businesses.

For many Canadians Canada Post remains a vital part of how we connect to each other, even in this digital age. It is also an important part of small and large businesses across Canada. Reliable postal services aid in putting money in the pockets of families and Canadians in need. They play a role in how bills get delivered and paid on time, and ensuring that parcels arrive at their destinations.

As we can see, there is far more at stake here than just mail delivery or good labour relations between Canada Post and its unionized workers. As a result of this long-simmering labour dispute, this has now become a matter that puts Canada's fragile economic recovery on the line. That is a risk that Canadians do not want to take, nor is it one that they should have to endure. They are counting on the Government of Canada to act and that is why we introduced this proposed legislation.

I will take a couple of minutes to outline the intent of this bill, along with the proposed economic risks entailed by this work

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stoppage. I will also explain why it is important that we take decisive action now rather than wait any longer.

This act would provide for the resumption and continuation of mail services at Canada Post. It would bring to an end the growing uncertainty that has characterized so much of this dispute for the last several months. The act would also impose a four year contract and new pay rate increases. It would mean a 1.75% increase as of February 1, 2011, 1.5% as of February 2012, 2% as of February 2013, and 2% as of February 2014. It would also provide a final offer selection, a binding mechanism on all outstanding matters.

Furthermore, in making the selection of a final offer, the arbitrator is to be guided by the need for terms and conditions of employment that are consistent with those in comparable postal industries and that will provide the necessary degree of flexibility to ensure the short and long-term economic viability and competitiveness of the Canada Post Corporation, maintain the health and safety of its workers, and ensure the sustainability of its pension plan.

The terms and conditions of employment must also take into account: first, that the solvency ratio of the pension plan must not decline as a direct result of the new collective agreement; and second, that the Canada Post Corporation must, without recourse to undue increases in postal rates, operate efficiently, improve productivity, and meet the acceptable standards of service. It is a decisive approach aimed at resolving this labour dispute. While the measures it calls for are not an ideal way of resolving this dispute, it would do what is necessary to safeguard Canadian families, businesses, seniors and workers.

Some might argue that we should wait, that we should let collective bargaining run its course no matter how long it takes. That is unwise. The risks to our economy are too great to ignore. Since talks between CUPW and their employer broke down, our country is now facing a potentially serious situation. Let us be clear about what has happened as a result of this labour dispute at Canada Post.

An integral part of what keeps Canada in business and what puts money in the pockets of many citizens is slowing to a standstill. Ask the small business owners who invoice and get paid through the mail. Ask a company that relies on the mail to issue bills, process orders and receive payments. Ask Canadian publishers and direct marketers whose livelihoods rely on the mail. Ask taxpayers who are waiting for their tax refunds and HST rebates to arrive. Ask citizens in the far north who rely on mail as an essential service of goods, such as prescription eyewear, dental products, drugs, legal documents, and still make payments by mail.

●(1030)

Our citizens cannot afford to be left waiting. They certainly should not be the ones who should bear the brunt of a labour dispute that shows no sign of being resolved through collective bargaining.

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As of June 17, the minister received a total of 1,800 letters and email enquiries. Of those, 1,027 requested back-to-work legislation: 692 Canadian citizens; 328 businesses; and 7 charities. The remainder represents 561 employees and 212 citizens expressing concerns.

The Canadian National Institute for the Blind stated:

With 70 per cent of its funding coming from donations, more than half of which arrive through the mail, CNIB is now facing an estimated loss of \$250,000 in much-needed funding for this time of the year.

The charity has also experienced \$30,000 in unexpected costs associated with communicating its contingency plan to clients, donors and library users.

One stakeholder, a leading provider of integrated mail and document management systems, is requesting a rapid intervention of the government to ensure reliable postal services and supporting the view of Canada Post as an essential service.

Many Canadians are beginning to see the repercussions of a work stoppage and are requesting a government intervention for the resumption of postal services.

It has been nearly 14 years since Canada last had a work stoppage at Canada Post. The numbers speak for themselves. A work stoppage could result in losses to our economy of between \$9 million and \$31 million per week. The work stoppage at Canada Post is expected to have an immeasurable impact on our economy.

Canada's gross domestic product could shrink by up to 0.21% for every day of work stoppage. That means every day more jobs at risk, more productivity lost, more challenges for businesses and more uncertainty for consumers.

Every other avenue has been tried to help bring a full and lasting resolution to this dispute. Parliament must do the right thing and intervene.

The parties have negotiated for direct collective bargaining from October 2010 to January 2011. When those talks stayed at an impasse, a conciliation officer was appointed. The conciliation period was extended into early May and during that time, the conciliation officer met again with the parties. Throughout the month of May, a mediator from the labour program's Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service met frequently with the parties.

Unfortunately, despite all of these efforts, an agreement between the parties has yet to be reached.

While the best solution may have been the one that the parties reached themselves, we must do what is necessary to protect our recovering economy and safeguard Canadian families, workers and businesses. We must act now to keep the businesses of Canada moving. That is what this proposed legislation would do.

It is my hope that all members of the House will join me in meeting our shared responsibility to Canadians and give this proposed legislation the support it deserves.

• (1035)

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my Conservative colleague a question.

We see the direction the government is going in. She says that the government is taking action to protect the economic recovery. It seems that nothing will stop it and that the government is going to use the excuse of the economic recovery.

I will be giving my speech shortly and voicing my opinions about this matter, but I would like to ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development a specific question. In this back-to-work legislation, why is the government offering lower wages than Canada Post had offered? Canada Post had proposed a 1.9% increase for January 2011. Now the Conservative government is telling Canada Post that its offer is too high and that it will make further reductions. Why punish the workers like that? Does the Conservative government hate the workers? Have we reached the point where the Conservative government is going so far as to include in a bill a proposal—it is more than a proposal because it will be the law—that will give workers less than what Canada Post had offered? What is behind this? I would like to understand because I do not understand it, unless the government hates the workers.

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Madam Speaker, I think it is incumbent upon all members of the House to act in the interests of all Canadians.

With respect to the wage increases, the proposed legislation includes wage rate increases consistent with other federal public sector collective agreements. The wage rate increases are the result of concessions in the public sector negotiations that take into consideration the future economic viability of Canada Post.

Canada has weathered an economic crisis and it is the federal government's responsibility to intervene in this unique circumstance to ensure the effects of this strike do not cause further negative impact on the Canadian economy, including its consumers, its charities and its businesses.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome the member to the House in her role as parliamentary secretary. It is sort of a dirty file to be handling the first time around but, nonetheless, it is her job at hand.

Organized labour in this country has really had a taste of what to expect over the next four years with the government, first with the legislation for Air Canada and now with this piece of legislation. There are a number of egregious aspects to this particular legislation in the guiding principle where it compares Canada Post to a private industry, which is totally unfair and shows the lack of understanding the government has for the function of Canada Post.

As my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst indicated, the parameters put around the salaries actually offer less than what Canada Post had on the table already. It is rare to see salary parameters in a piece of legislation but ones that are less than what was on the table initially is mind-blowing. The government just does not understand. Then, the fact that it is final offer arbitration is of concern. This is an all or nothing craphoot.

In ignoring the requests of CUPW to this point which have obviously been ignored in the legislation, would the Conservatives at least comply with the one request that the appointed arbitrator is one agreed upon by CUPW?

• (1040)

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Madam Speaker, we are all disappointed that the parties have been unable to reach an agreement of their own, despite months of negotiation. Nothing in this proposed legislation precludes the employer and the union from entering into a new collective agreement before the legislation is passed. I strongly encourage the parties to return to the bargaining table and send those outstanding issues that they deem appropriate to voluntary arbitration in order to resolve this dispute now.

This is about Canadians. This is about ensuring Canadian businesses, charities and small businesses can get back to work.

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Madam Speaker, some of the residents of my riding would like to know and understand our role. I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary what role Labour Canada has played throughout the negotiations of a new collective agreement between the parties?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Madam Speaker, with respect to the back-to-work legislation, Labour Canada has worked diligently, as has our minister.

Since January 31, Minister Raitt has supported the parties in their negotiations by appointing a conciliation officer and a mediator. Over the past five months, proposals and counter-proposals were exchanged. However, the parties are still far apart and no agreement has been achieved.

While a negotiated settlement is always preferred, the consequences of work stoppage extend far beyond the parties themselves and the economic impact of the dispute can no longer be tolerated. Canada has weathered a global economic crisis and it is the federal government's responsibility to intervene in these unique circumstances.

Given the lack of progress of these two parties, Minister Raitt tabled our back-to-work legislation which puts in a process to help ensure that this dispute is determined and that the dispute comes to an end so Canadians can get back to work.

The Deputy Speaker: I would just remind all hon. members that sitting members' names cannot be mentioned in the House. A very brief question, the hon. member for Western Arctic.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise to question the parliamentary secretary on her seemingly inconsistent approach to this.

She says the government has taken the recent public sector wage increases into account when it put this legislation together, yet at the same time she does not recognize Canada Post as a crown corporation.

Why would the parliamentary secretary not put forward to that crown corporation, the requirement that it quits this lockout, which has really been the problem in this whole dispute? That has stopped the postal service from working at all.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Madam Speaker, our government has been working with both parties. We have viewed it as the responsibility of both parties to come to an agreement that they find appropriate and acceptable.

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We are hopeful that they will continue at the bargaining table and come to a resolution of their issue together. That is what is best for the parties and what is best for Canadians.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Madam Speaker, why is the government not allowing the two parties to negotiate? Why does it not take away the gun, that is this legislation, which is being held to their heads?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned before, these two parties have both been at the table with the help of a conciliation officer as well as a mediator for numerous months.

This is about making sure Canadians can get back to work. Our economy is fragile. We need to move forward so that small businesses, charities, and those individuals who need to receive their benefits, eyewear and drugs, in the far north, actually receive those things.

We need to get them back to work.

• (1045)

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate, but under the circumstances, I am certainly not happy that it is taking place, given the current crisis.

I listened to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development. I asked her why the government's bill sets out a 1.75% salary increase, which is less than Canada Post's offer of 1.9%. Now she is inviting the parties to return to the bargaining table to reach a collective agreement; otherwise, the government will pass legislation. What planet is she living on? Canada Post is saying to itself that if there is no settlement, it will not need to grant a 1.9% salary increase because the government will legislate that it be set at 1.7%. Is that bargaining? In reality, the government has taken away any possibility of bargaining. With its proposed bill, it is interfering directly with negotiations instead of finding a bargaining mechanism.

I understand that people need Canada Post's services and that this is hurting small and medium-sized businesses. I am aware of that and I have been receiving calls about it. But we need to understand what has happened here. Negotiations were under way, but the parliamentary secretary felt that they were taking too long. But sometimes that is what is needed in order for a settlement to be reached. That is how bargaining works. When the two parties come to an agreement, labour relations are better than if the government forces things by passing legislation. That is not the government's role. Let us be clear: many people today do not believe that unions should exist. I invite those people to go to countries where there are no unions, where people are paid minimum wage, which is not the same as it is in Canada. It is a form of slavery. Is that what the government wants?

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This bill to force a return to work demonstrates a lack of respect for working men and women who were able to form a union under a statute of Canada. Unionization is a right. Today, the Conservative government is taking away that right. It did the same thing last week with Air Canada after only one day of strike action. The government used the economic recovery as an excuse, saying that it had received a strong mandate from Canadians to do whatever it wants.

Yes, the Conservatives received a majority mandate here in the House of Commons, but they did not in the rest of the country. Only 40% of Canadians said that they wanted to be governed by the Conservatives. I believe it may have even been 39.9% or 39.8%. That is 39% or 40% of 61% of voters. That is not even 100% of voters; it is a mere 40%. Before unions existed, people took to the streets to improve their situation. Workers had to take to the streets. There was fighting in the streets, blood was spilled and people lost their lives to improve their families' situation and to have the right to free bargaining.

• (1050)

So what happened? The government said that this must stop, that it was going to pass laws allowing workers to form unions and negotiate collective agreements. The government said that it was going to give workers the legal right to call a strike, which prevented all the bloodshed in the streets. That is what happened.

Do we want to go back to the way things were? Is that what the Conservative government wants? Canada Post is not going bankrupt. Canada Post made \$281 million in profit. Canada Post's most recent financial report is two months overdue. I would like to see the latest numbers. I would like Canada Post to give them to us. Perhaps Canada Post made more than \$281 million in profit.

At a certain point, Canada Post employees decided to hold rotating strikes. Employees in Montreal went on strike for one day and those in Toronto, Vancouver, Bathurst and Halifax, for example, each also took their turn at conducting a one-day strike.

Canada Post also decided to deliver the mail only three days a week. The Minister of Labour stated publicly on the news yesterday that she did not receive any comments from Canadians while the employees were working only three days a week or when they were on a rotating strike. She received maybe 30 emails on this subject and that was it. There was no problem.

What did the government want? The employees did not want to stage a general strike, so Canada Post, a crown corporation, responded with a lockout. Once the lockout was imposed, the government would decide to force the employees back to work and to take away their benefits. The government is proving this right now, with this bill.

What did Canada Post employees and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers say? They told the government and Canada Post to reinstate and respect their old collective agreement. They asked for their health benefits to be reinstated and said they would go back to the bargaining table without any rotating strikes. They asked that all workers be called back to work. Canada Post refused. I personally went to see the Minister of Labour to ask her why the crown corporation was not told to do that alone, that is, to go back to the

bargaining table to try to resolve the conflict between the two parties and to reach a collective agreement.

The government refused to tell Canada Post, a crown corporation, to go back to the bargaining table and respect the collective agreement. Was it because the government does not want to interfere with a crown corporation? Yet at the same time, it is introducing a bill that is not good for workers.

What does this mean for other non-unionized workers who do not support what is happening here? Let us think about that. If Canada had no unions, if they all disappeared tomorrow, we can only imagine the abuses that would take place. Has anyone thought about that? The workers did not want to take away people's right to receive mail, since letter carriers were willing to go back to work if Canada Post would respect their old collective agreement.

I would remind the House that an agreement could have been reached to allow Canadians and our SMEs to start getting their mail again.

• (1055)

I remember when I worked as a miner in the Brunswick mine in 1976. In an 18-month period, six people were killed underground. I remember what we were able to do with the union: change the country's laws to give the families of the miners who got up and went to work in the morning the right to see their family members come home in the evening and to ensure better working conditions in order to prevent miners from getting killed.

Consider what happened at the Westray mine in Nova Scotia, when 26 miners were killed in the mine. The bodies of 11 of those miners are still in that mine today. The company violated every health and safety law. Even when the mine closed, the employees joined the steelworkers' union. They fought by bringing bills here to the House of Commons because under the law, the government could not even prosecute company presidents who were not in Nova Scotia for failing to meet health and safety requirements. We called it the Westray bill, to ensure that these people could be brought to justice. If the union had not fought for the health and safety of the miners, we would not have this legislation that every worker in Canada benefits from today.

[English]

I know the people of this country need their mail. We understand that. Postal workers understand that. They are professionals.

We all see people from Canada Post delivering our mail. These people are professionals. They work hard. We just need to look at the conditions they work in. On a hot day during the summer, they are outside with their backpacks delivering our mail. Even during a storm in the wintertime these people bring our mail to our door. We have to respect these men and women who work hard for us. They deserve a pension plan. The new generation deserves to have the same thing our parents and their parents fought for.

The government should not have introduced a bill to take away the workers' rights, their pension plans or their health benefits. The government has no business doing that or getting involved in the way it has.

Canada Post was ready to give a 1.9% increase to its workers, but in Bill C-6 the Conservative government is bringing that down to 1.75%. The government is telling postal workers that if they do not want that increase, they should get back to the table and negotiate a contract. And why does the government expect Canada Post to get back to the negotiating table and negotiate a contract when it will get a better one forced by the Conservative government of this country?

I do not know what is wrong with the Conservative government. Why does it hate the workers? Why is it attacking the workers through the bill? Why is it saying that a postal workers' agreement should be compared with those in other industries? I do not know if I sleep on a different planet, but I thought that Canada Post was the only industry in our country bringing Canadians their mail. Who is Canada Post going to be compared to? The United States? Mexico? Is it going to be compared to Brazil? What comparison will the arbitrator make?

If the government believes in workers, if it respects workers, then why is there not even one little paragraph in the bill taking the side of the workers? There is not one paragraph in the bill where the government sides with the workers.

Other workers might be next. Today it is Canada Post, tomorrow it will be somebody else, and it could be those in the private sector too. I say this because the government became involved last week with Air Canada in the same way. Other workers can sit back and wait, because this will happen to them. One day people will say enough is enough.

The government wants to save money for what? It gives big tax breaks to big corporations. We just need to look, for example, at Air Canada. The president and CEO of Air Canada paid himself \$7 million and will leave with a pension of \$350,000. That is no problem for him. The banks made profits of \$20 billion and paid \$11 billion in bonuses, yet the Conservatives have given them a break. The Conservatives are running out of money to give their big friends.

I respect the workers. The one thing the government should do is to get out of the negotiations. The government should provide a mechanism for the negotiations and tell the parties to get back to the negotiations, respect the old collective agreement and get to a contract. However, the government does not seem to believe in that. It will negotiate a contract and make sure that the parties do not negotiate one, and it will use the economic recovery as the reason and "take care" of the workers for Canada Post.

Why? It is because the Conservatives are the friends of big business, not of the working men and women who get up in the morning and build this country. These men and women have the right to receive a pension and a decent living. They have that right. They earned their pension plans. They earned those benefits.

● (1100)

The Conservative government should be ashamed of itself. Yes, it got support. Yes, it is a majority government.

However, did the Conservatives ever tell all workers what they would do with them if they ever got elected? Did we see in their platform their intention to legislate people to work with a lesser collective agreement than their employer would give them? Did they

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say that? No, according to the union. It is not honest for the Conservatives to do that.

Just give the people free bargaining and the mechanism to do it. That is the way to go.

[Translation]

The government's behaviour is shameful. It is setting a precedent for which everyone will pay dearly. I cannot say enough that I do not understand why the Conservative government hates workers so much or why it is slapping them with a bill like this. I hope that in the coming days, the government will receive motions in amendment, will recognize what the workers do and will be able to find solutions.

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, let us be clear. This is about ensuring that all Canadians can receive essential services, like drugs and eyewear and services in the north, and so that businesses can still function and charities can still receive funds and donations.

What is the member's response to the CNIB and, in particular, to the little girl who is not receiving her eyeglasses through the mail and who therefore cannot learn or play? What would he say to that six-year-old child about not receiving her eyeglasses so she can go to school and play in the playground like she wants to?

● (1105)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Madam Speaker, I would tell this little six-year-old girl that the Conservative government has refused to tell Canada Post to get back to the table with its collective agreement and negotiate in good faith. I would tell the little girl that when she gets older, I hope it is not a Conservative government in power that would hit on her the way they are doing today. I would tell that little girl that if she wants to buy glasses, I hope she has a decent job with good pay that the Conservative Party will not take away from her. I would make sure that the little girl never voted for the Conservative Party her whole life.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with many of the points that my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst made. I just want to elaborate on a couple in particular.

Certainly the salary parameters in this legislation and the lesser offer by the government than the one by Canada Post just blows everyone's mind. The final offer of arbitration is something that no one wanted.

However, the point that is very concerning, and I want to hear my colleague's comments on this one in particular, is the guiding principle of the legislation, which would be just one further handcuff on the arbitrator. It states:

In making the selection of a final offer, the arbitrator is to be guided by the need for terms and conditions of employment that are consistent with those in comparable postal industries—

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There are no other comparable postal industries than Canada Post. Canada Post serves this entire nation, rural and remote. If this legislation is referring to FedEx or UPS, or any of those services, those companies will come in and cherry-pick the most profitable services and let the rest of the country fend for itself.

What frightens me about this piece of legislation is that the government is pointing toward privatization of a national service.

I would like to hear the member's comments on this.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Madam Speaker, exactly. That is what the government is doing.

What the government has to remember is that if it goes with privatization of Canada Post and goes with UPS or FedEx or any of those companies, we already know that those companies will not go to rural areas. They do not want to bring little letters to six-year-old girls who want to get their glasses in the mail. Those companies do not want to go there because they will not make money. The danger with the privatization of Canada Post is exactly that. The danger is that those other companies will want to have mail routes to Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver and Halifax. However, the little regions can forget about it.

We have had a taste of that when Canada Post said it would only deliver mail three days a week. Is this the new era? Is this the message it wants to get through in advance?

It was the parliamentary secretary for human resources who talked about making comparisons with other countries.

What happens if the arbitrator makes comparisons with another country that pays better wages than Canada? What happens if they have a better pension plan than Canada does? What happens if the arbitrator makes comparisons with five countries that pay better than Canada? Will the government accept the decision of the arbitrator?

I do not believe so, not with a bill that says that if the parties do not come to an agreement, the workers will get paid less than what Canada Post was ready to pay. That is the danger with the government getting involved in negotiations when it should not. The government should be there to put in place a mechanism to get people to negotiate, and not dictate what happens.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is a very important debate today. I have been sitting in the House listening very carefully.

I find it really disturbing that the Liberal members at the end of the House are not exactly heckling but are not listening at all to this debate. They are talking loudly, and so I would suggest that if they do not want to hear the debate, they should actually leave the room so those of us who want to hear the debate can actually do that.

I am not making it a point of order. I am just making a comment.

I really appreciate what the member for Acadie—Bathurst has said today, because I think he has really struck at the core of the problem with this legislation. The thing that I find most disturbing is that it was Canada Post that locked out its workers. The union actually wants to negotiate, but it has been locked out by the employer.

I find it very curious that the government, instead of talking to Canada Post and insisting that it goes back and negotiates, has done

nothing in terms of the lockout and now, as the member has said, has brought forward legislation that does not include a single thing that will actually assist the workers in any way.

I remember our debating back to work legislation for Canada Post in 1997, after both of us were elected to this House, when it was a Liberal government that brought in legislation. I am sure the member will remember.

I would like to ask the member to comment on the lockout, what that has meant and why the government has not taken action in regard to the lockout.

• (1110)

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Madam Speaker, through the law, members of a bargaining unit have the right to go on strike. Through the law, employers have the right to lock out their employees.

We all understand that. However, in this case, the government is saying that it wants people back to work and the union is saying to the government that it should tell Canada Post, a crown corporation, to just respect the old collective agreement and then the union will then be back at the table. Canada Post decided to lock out its employees, yet the government is neither noting this nor introducing a bill to punish Canada Post. Instead, the government is punishing the workers by offering them a wage increase of 1.7% instead of the 1.9% Canada Post offered them.

Do we not believe the government was behind Canada Post not negotiating? Do we not think Canada Post was talking to the government? It was all fixed, as far as I am concerned. If not, why is the government taking Canada Post's side and going further?

This will not result in negotiation. I cannot see in any way the government bringing negotiations. How could the parties negotiate a collective agreement when the umpire, in its back pocket, has a bill coming to the House of Commons with less than what Canada Post proposed?

That is why I said, my dear colleagues—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Many people are rising and I would like to give them the opportunity.

For a last question, the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Madam Speaker. I remember when remailers had 10,000 jobs, in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal and they were on the hook. The NDP did not support those workers.

I come from a constituency that has the largest number of union members per capita of any city in the country. They tell me clearly that they want Canada Post to get back to work. They need their mail because some workers get their cheques by mail, just like the seniors who get their cheques by mail, which they cannot get right now because Canada Post on strike.

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NDP members voted against the economic action plan, the biggest investment ever by any government in Canada's history in real dollar terms. How can they say today that workers do not use roads, or do not use bridges or do not use all those investments, the green infrastructure that went into the economic action plan? Why do they now stand and say that? Is the hon. member red faced because he is doing too much sucking and blowing? That is what it causes, a red face. It is not fair that today he says he stands up for workers.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Madam Speaker, if the member has integrity, he should apologize. I do not choose that my blood gets right to the brain and gets me to do my job. I will not apologize for that. He should apologize. This is wrong.

Is that what he feels about workers and people who do their jobs? He will never take away my right to speak in the House. I cannot control my blood. I cannot control my heart, and my heart is for the working men and women and all those in small businesses who get up in the morning and do a hard day's work. We are here to get better benefits for them, not like the Conservative government that wants to take benefits away.

In the member's own riding in Alberta, they bring in foreign workers to do cheap labour and Canadians do not even have a job. How many times have I talked to him about it? He never got back to me. He keeps saying that he is defending the workers. The Conservatives should give our workers work as well instead of bringing cheap labour—

● (1115)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Toronto Centre.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak in the debate following the comments from the member for Simcoe—Grey, who we all welcome to the House, and, as well, my colleague and friend from Acadie—Bathurst, who gave a particularly eloquent and forceful address to the House this morning.

In looking at the legislation and hearing the debate, it is hard to avoid the sense that we are caught in this almost absurd situation where the government's narrative and description of itself is that it alone stands between the Canadian people and chaos. It says that if it were not for the bill, the Canadian economy would be brought instantly to its knees, the fragile economic recovery, which is the phrase the Conservatives use over and over again, would be smashed on the floor to smithereens. It says that this legislation, and this legislation alone, which protects pensioners, workers, charities and all those institutions so important to the country, would provide this protection.

That is the morality play on one side. In response, the Conservatives brought in back to work legislation, but it is back to work legislation with a real difference.

For my friends in the House, and particularly my friends in the New Democratic Party, I do not think there is a government, either federally or provincially of whatever political stripe, whether it is of any political stripe, that has not, at one point or another, had to bring in back to work legislation in order to protect the public interest. I have not heard members of the NDP in opposition ever say that they would consider doing such a thing, but I can assure them that at the provincial level, the NDP governments of Saskatchewan, Manitoba

and British Columbia have had to bring in back to work legislation from time to time.

That is not the cardinal sin we are talking about here. No government in the country can ignore the public interest, which is impossible to ignore. Any party that trumpets itself as wanting or aspiring to be a government would recognize that it is not back to work legislation in and of itself that is the cardinal sin. It is how it is done.

This is where the government has allowed its ideology to take hold, to take over and to create legislation that is an affront to the notion of a fair and equal treatment of people in a back to work situation. Let us remember the very basics. The right to organize, to bargain collectively and to withdraw labour is a right that is now, thanks to the Supreme Court of Canada, is a constitutionally protected right in our country. It is recognized as fundamental to the notion of living in a democratic society.

[Translation]

The right to bargain collectively, to create a union and to be able to legally strike is a constitutional right that must be recognized. Yet, because of a public interest greater than this right, or because of a public emergency, the government may decide that it has the right to do what it is doing now. However, if the government exercises this right, it has a responsibility to protect the public interest. As Liberals, we recognize that this right exists in each democratic government. But this right must be exercised intelligently and in a way that respects the rights of individuals and communities.

[English]

If the government takes away the right to collective bargaining, it has to be careful how it does it. It has to recognize that it is interfering in an important constitutional right and it cannot be done just any old way.

My colleagues opposite are currently rapt in attention to every word I am saying, though sometimes it is hard to tell. I can see the members shaking their heads from time to time. However, when this right is exercised, it has to be exercised with care.

In this case, it has not been exercised with care, although we on this side recognize that the legislation will be and is popular with a public that is frustrated with a work stoppage and very much wants the service to be resumed. People want their postal service. We understand that. Everybody understands that. We understand there is an inconvenience to the public and not only an inconvenience, as the parliamentary secretary has rightly pointed out, but people are losing money.

Canada Post is losing money to the tune of about \$25 million a day. The workers are losing money because they are not being paid and they are not getting their benefits. We also know many businesses across the country, small and large, charities and individuals, are losing money because of this lock-out. There is no question this is taking place.

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However, when a government exercises its duty to protect the public interest, it has to do it in a way that is careful and thoughtful because it is taking away an existing right, even if it is popular. We all know that, from time to time, taking away people's rights can be temporarily and in the short term popular. I am perfectly well aware that when we go outside in a scrum, talk to the media and say that we are not in favour of the legislation, many Canadians will shake their heads and ask why not, that it is a good thing, that people will be getting back to work.

It is not a good thing for some very precise reasons. The precise reasons are to be found in clauses 11, 13 and 15 of the legislation. I ask members to turn clause 11 of the legislation and follow along. My colleague from Cape Breton has already talked about this. It is the way in which the discretion of the arbitrator has been entirely tied and fettered by what the government has done. When the right to strike is taken away, usually an arbitrator is appointed whose job is to provide as fair a conclusion as might be reached by an effective collective agreement, if a collective agreement could be reached.

However, in this instance, the government has said that it will appoint an arbitrator, but the arbitrator has to follow all the criteria with respect to comparable postal industries, whatever they might be. There is only one postal industry in Canada of which I am aware. There is a variety of logistics companies and there is a variety of competitors for the post office, but they operate under very different conditions as has already been stated. They have a very different market. They are not providing a service to the general public, which includes everyone, including services that have a great deal of difficulty making money. It goes on to say that the arbitrator will:

—provide the necessary degree of flexibility to ensure the short- and long-term economic viability and competitiveness of the Canada Post Corporation, maintain the health and safety of its workers and ensure the sustainability of its pension plan, taking into account

(a) that the solvency ratio [which cannot be changed]...; and

(b) that the Canada Post Corporation must, without recourse to undue increases in postal rates, operate efficiently, improve productivity and meet acceptable standards of service.

Therefore, the arbitrator is really being asked to do a job, but he or she is being asked to do a job in a very particular way. The arbitrator is also being asked to do a job, not in finding a solution based on judgment alone but, saying that he or she wants the final best offer from either side. Basically we are asking the union to compete with the employer to see who can bid down these rates as low as possible and who can come up with the cheapest possible plan in order to get to the end.

● (1120)

Then section 13 says that we can bargain and in the meantime we can bargain on salaries.

However, subsection 13(3) says that if a salary calculated in accordance or determined under a new collective agreement is not identical to the result of the increases referred to in section 15, to which I will come in a moment, the new collective agreement is deemed to provide for the salary being increased as provided for in that section.

In ordinary layman's terms, what that means is we cannot bargain money. Therefore, we cannot bargain pensions because we cannot affect the solvency ratio in any way, shape or form. We cannot

bargain practically anything else because we might be seen to be affecting the overall competitiveness and productivity of Canada Post. We cannot bargain salaries because the salaries will be dictated by this law.

This is not an arbitration process as would be defined by any court or any labour board in the country. This is not an arbitration that is a substitute for collective bargaining and for the resolution of a dispute, by the exercise of raw, economic power, which is the way in which collective bargaining works in our marketplace.

As has already been pointed out by other speakers, section 15 provides for very precise numbers on how much the workers will be allowed to earn over the next three years, backdated to January 31, 2011.

● (1125)

[Translation]

So what does this mean? The arbitration system created by this bill is in no way equivalent to the bargaining process. It is clear in all Supreme Court of Canada decisions that, if the government takes away collective rights or bargaining rights, it must provide an alternative that guarantees that arbitration will be equivalent to bargaining, in terms of the process or maybe even the result.

[English]

The law of the Supreme Court is very clear on taking away the right to strike for whatever reason.

For example, in most provinces there is a right to strike that is taken away for police officers. There is a right to strike that is taken away from people who work in fire departments and emergency services. In some provinces, there is a right to strike that is taken away with respect to hospital workers. These are essential services and there are all kinds of laws put in place to make sure that services continue for the public when they are being disrupted.

In some situations governments would not allow a strike. However, in those circumstances governments have a legal obligation to provide a process that is equal to the collective bargaining process. It must be equal in process and in its potential result. This is not just my opinion, as valuable as I sometimes think that is, it is the constitutional law of this country.

I say to the government opposite that this law is not constitutional. Now, we would only find that out in two or three years. However, the government cannot interfere in collective bargaining to this extent and in this way and not provide an alternative that is at least equal in process and result. That has not been done in this legislation.

I think the government understands this and is engaging us in an act of political theatre knowing full well that there are some in the House who will simply play the game in response. They would say ideologically that they are opposed to any interference in the collective bargaining process. They will stand up and go on filibustering to defend the rights of workers in any and all situations pretending that there is no public interest in the provision of the service when in fact we all know that there is. Perhaps the official opposition will take the bait which is being laid before them by the government.

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I have listened to the speeches so far and to the commentary that one hears in the lobby about how this would be filibustered until the cows come home to delay the legislation for all time. The members may throw themselves in front of the Mace and do everything possible to delay the passage of the legislation. I would say the bait has been laid and the bait has been taken. It is too bad for Canada that we do not have a pragmatic, practical approach to the resolution of the dispute which is there to be found.

In our party we come at this without any ideological baggage or wanting to prove to Canadians that we alone are standing between them and utter, complete chaos. We do not have any pretensions to that. We believe in collective bargaining. We believe it is an important right. We also understand that it is not an absolute right. There are times and circumstances when the exercise of it, either by an employer or a trade union, can cause damage and harm to the public. In those circumstances there is an obligation to intervene.

In this particular situation it is rather peculiar. The employer, Canada Post, is very profitable, and by the way, it is owned by the government. The government pretends, "Canada Post, who is that?" Well, the government owns and controls it.

I would be astonished if the management of Canada Post did not discuss with the government of the day what its plans were with respect to collective bargaining. It knows that if it does not go well the House would be involved coming back. No management of Canada Post would just lock people out and wait to see what happens. I do not think that is the way the world works and certainly not governments with which I have been familiar. People tend to talk through some of the consequences when crown corporations are involved and engaged.

What would a possible solution to this situation look like?

First, the government could say to the employer, the company it owns, that it does not think a lockout is a very good idea. Also, the company could say to the union that when it goes back there should be no nonsense about rotating strikes.

• (1130)

Before members of the New Democratic Party start nodding too loudly, they might want to listen to what I am going to say.

The government would have to say that there will be no more nonsense about rotating strikes and disrupting service, that it will give the parties time to reach a collective agreement and if they do not, it will then talk about mediation and arbitration, which will not look like this, but it is going to protect the public interest. If after a period of time, the parties are not able to reach an agreement, they will be told to reach an agreement on what they can and then refer the other issues to arbitration.

That is what happened in the Air Canada situation last week.

An hon. member: Sensible.

Hon. Bob Rae: That is a perfectly sensible solution. It is not ideal, it does not assert the ideological interests of anyone over anyone else.

To my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst, for whom I have a great deal of respect and, dare I say it, even affection, when he talks about

the rights of the workers I say yes, but let us not forget we have to have an efficient Canada Post. We have to have a profitable Canada Post. We have to have an employer that is solvent. It is a good idea to have those things.

We cannot just say we are here for the interests of the workers and we do not give a darn about the state of the employer or the company. If we are going to be fair and reasonable about things, we have to say that we want to protect the rights of the workers and we also want to have an effective and efficient organization that continues to serve the public and does so in an affordable way. Those are all legitimate objectives.

I know my colleagues in the New Democratic Party share those objectives. I just wish that once in a while they would state them more explicitly so people would understand that not every economic movement in the country is a kind of morality play where there are good guys wearing white hats and bad guys wearing black hats. This is not how the world works.

The post office needs to do well and the workers need to do well. When they cannot reach a solution and it disrupts services to the public, the government has to step in, but not like this. This is not the way to step in. This is a way of stepping in that ensures more ill-feeling and potential conflict as time goes on.

There is a wiser solution to the one that has been proposed by the government. I do not know whether a government that is in this state of triumphal mentality is going to be interested in discussing amendments, changes or ways of improving the legislation, I have no idea. However, I would say to members of the House and members of the public who are listening that there is a better way and we in the Liberal Party look forward to pursuing it.

• (1135)

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Madam Speaker, I recognize that in 1997 or thereabouts the previous Liberal government actually—

I find it difficult to ask my question because of the Liberals across the way. As the leader of the Liberal Party said, there is some noise in different places and it is very difficult to think when it takes place.

In 1997, the previous Liberal government did something similar in comparable circumstances with Canada Post. I notice today that the leader of the Liberal Party is taking a different position. Of course, he was previously an NDP leader and I am wondering if this is the preliminary notice of a joint venture between the NDP and the Liberals in all future governing matters and positions on legislation or, indeed, if this is the new policy of the Liberal Party and the NDP leader.

I would like him to clarify that for us to find out where he is going long-term since it seems to be such a divergent path from a responsible governing party as the Liberal government used to be.

Hon. Bob Rae: Madam Speaker, I wonder if my friend was actually listening to what I was saying. I am astonished.

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What I said was there are many circumstances in which back-to-work legislation may well be justified. I have said there are governments across the country that have brought it in. It is not unique to the current government. It is not a uniquely ideological step. What the government has done with this legislation in this way has turned it into an ideological step. That is the problem we in the Liberal Party have with it.

The circumstance in 1997, and one can check it historically, was that there had been a strike rather than a lockout that had gone on for two or two and a half weeks. There have been many times in the postal service and many other areas, rail strikes and others, where the federal government has felt a need to intervene. I would be supportive of that in principle as long as what is being substituted for the right to strike is fair and reasonable. What I am saying, and perhaps the member was not listening to what I was saying, was that what the government has put in this is not fair and reasonable.

I hope the member opposite will listen to the amendments as well as to the arguments. He is entitled to make the jokes and comments he likes. I am only going to be here for a short time, so where I lead this group I have no idea, but what I do know is that it is going to be based on some principles and I do not see any worthwhile principles in this bill.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would just like to make a comment that I have been following the file of Canada Post and its effect on our rural communities for quite a while now. I have seen some pretty devastating policies that cut back part-time work and that transferred people arbitrarily.

I have sort of come to the conclusion that Canada Post is functioning as a ruthless corporation, certainly in regard to rural B.C. I would like the hon. member to comment.

The other fact I learned is that Canada Post is mandated to make a profit, but not only to make a profit but to give part of this profit back to the federal government. Other industrialized nations actually subsidize their national postal service.

I would like to hear the hon. member's comments on what seems to be a ludicrous idea, that we have a corporation here that is mandated to make a profit, not only to make ends meet but to give part of this money back to the federal government, and institutes policies on the backs of the workers.

There is something that is not quite logical here. I would just like to hear the hon. members comments on this.

Hon. Bob Rae: Madam Speaker, it is when I hear questions like that, that I realize why I am over here.

I say to the hon. member with the greatest of respect that profit is not a nasty word. If Ontario Hydro or B.C. Hydro is going to operate, we do not want every crown corporation or every operation of government to be operating at a loss. That is not a great idea. That creates huge problems for the government, when that happens.

The member may be advocating massive public subsidies for Canada Post as the answer to the problem, so that Canada Post would be supported by taxpayers generally.

I think the model is having a postal corporation that works effectively and efficiently, that makes changes. I would not describe Canada Post as ruthless. Canada Post is facing a world of competition, a world with many private companies competing for business. It has customers that are saying that if it does not provide them with a reliable service, they are going to take their business somewhere else. Having that cycle is not in the interests of postal workers and it is not in the interests of the Canadian public.

So the notion, somehow, that Canada Post has joined the ranks of the ruthless corporations and that Canada Post is doing something evil, called making a profit, really confirms my view that for all that may or may not have happened on the weekend, moving into the future does not seem to have been one of the events that took place.

• (1140)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments put forward in the member's intervention.

For all of those watching today, they saw that it was practical and pragmatic in the assessment of the overall current situation, but also in how we should be approaching labour relations in this country.

I believe roughly 35 pieces of back-to-work legislation have been passed since roundabout 1950. Over 60 years, that is about how many have been passed. The government has come forward with and tabled two pieces of back-to-work legislation in less than two weeks.

My question to my colleague is, does he see this as the template? We know that a number of contracts are coming due this summer. Is this what organized labour can expect? Or, does the member think the government is simply trying to break some kind of a record here, wowing the world with how fast it can pass back-to-work legislation? Is there a Guinness book of records entry that the government is trying to pass?

Hon. Bob Rae: Madam Speaker, I want to assure the House that the good thing about this caucus is that I have no idea what questions my caucus colleagues are going to be asking, so I appreciate the chance to respond. This is quite an unscripted organization.

In response to the member, this legislation serves two purposes, like many things in politics.

We have gone through over the last week political theatre of a classic kind. This is a government which is, as I have said, playing out its part in a morality play. It is trying to demonstrate what would have happened if the Air Canada dispute continued, which had gone on for a full total of 24 hours, which had no disruption to service, which had no disruption to the flying public, and which had no threat to anybody or anything.

Yet, the Minister of Finance was giving a scrum, nodding very seriously, saying this is very ominous for the fragile economic recovery. The parliamentary secretary stood in her place today and said, and I was waiting for the words, we need to do this in order to stop the fragile economic recovery. So there is a theatre going on here.

Government Orders

However, there is also something very serious. It is taking away the rights of all Canadians, not just the postal workers. This says that the government places zero value in the constitutional rights that have been put forward by the Supreme Court of Canada. That is what the government is saying.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, my question is for the hon. member for Toronto Centre. In grappling with this, and I have some background, as members might know, in labour law, it seems that the employer invoked a lockout at a very critical moment. It is the employer and not the union that has created the problems with the delivery of mail. The revolving strikes were not impeding that.

I wonder if there is such a thing one could conceive, and the hon. member for Toronto Centre might have an idea, and that is for back-to-work legislation for management to do its job.

Hon. Bob Rae: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands is quite right when she points out, as I did in my remarks, and others, that this is not a strike. This is a lockout; a lockout which has kept the workers from doing the work which they themselves want to do.

However, what I have also said is, and I think it is important to stress this, that if one were to simply say, as the union has suggested, “Let’s just go back to work and bargain”, which sounds very nice and we all would like to see that happen, there does have to be some quid pro quo for that. We do have to say to the union, “Okay, go back to work, but no more flying strikes, no more rotating strikes, no more disruptions of service”. That poses a consistent threat to the ability of the company to attract business. There are many customers that have now left Canada Post and will not come back if their service cannot be guaranteed. They will simply take their business elsewhere. This is the commercial reality in which Canada Post is operating. While it is a crown corporation, no crown corporation operates, today, outside the framework of commercial reality.

• (1145)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today in support of Bill C-6, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services. I, too, have heard many of the comments, including some of the entertaining, at times, logical comments made by the member for Toronto Centre. However, this is in fact a very serious matter—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member.

I would ask the members at the back of the chamber to please keep it down. Several members have mentioned that they are being disturbed by the loud comments.

The hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Madam Speaker, it is obviously very disappointing that we are faced with the current work stoppage at Canada Post. Our government has spent countless hours and resources encouraging Canada Post and CUPW to resolve their differences and to come to an agreement. Mediators have spent countless hours with the parties in an attempt to bring them to some sort of consensus and to form an agreement. Mediators have been employed to do the very same thing. Despite all of the efforts, all of

the resources, and all of the countless hours, the parties have not been able to resolve their differences and come to an agreement.

In all cases, the best solution in any labour dispute is one where the parties are able to resolve the differences themselves and come to an agreement on their own volition. That is always the best course. We try to facilitate that by every means that we can to provide the underpinnings, to provide the atmosphere, and to provide the basis for which that can happen.

In this case the government has exhausted every avenue available under the Canada Labour Code to bring the parties together and to assist them to reach an agreement. Despite all of that and all of the resources, it was to no avail. It is clear at this point that the negotiations between the parties have stalled and that some decisive action is necessary. We have decided to act decisively to bring this matter to a conclusion.

That is why this legislation was introduced. It is fair and reasonable. It is an objective way to bring the parties to a resolution of their dispute and resolve their differences. In a case like this, when parliamentarians step in, it is with the view of ending the current work stoppage that is affecting Canadians right across the country.

Whether it be rotating strikes or a lockout, they have consequences on Canadians. We have to look at not only the interests of the parties, whether it is the employer, Canada Post, a government department, and the effect it may have on employees, and the member for Acadie—Bathurst spoke about the effect on employees. But a third party is also involved in this dispute and that is the average Canadian. The consequences on many Canadians are significant. There needs to be a way to resolve the dispute, to resolve the differences between the parties in such a fashion that does least hurt to the parties, that does least hurt to Canadians, and does least hurt to the economy.

What is at stake right now is our economic recovery. Our country has so many reasons to be optimistic. We have experienced the strongest economic growth among the G7 countries since mid-2009. We have recovered countless numbers of jobs since July 2009. Things are looking up. They are going in the right direction. All of the job losses incurred during the global economic recession have been recovered. We must protect that recovery.

In order to protect this economic recovery, it became clear that it was necessary to introduce back-to-work legislation in the House of Commons. We need to protect the sustainability of the economic recovery and ensure that injury is not done to Canadians.

Just a few weeks ago our government indicated in the throne speech that our priorities remain focused on jobs and economic growth. We also noted that the global economic recovery remains fragile and risks to our economic recovery persist. That is a reality. That is a present fact.

When we look at what other economies are doing in the world and across our border to the south, we know that any gains are incremental and must be safely guarded and protected to ensure that we go forward with the knowledge that our economy is going to continue to grow and that Canadians will continue to benefit from that.

Government Orders

The legislation we are talking about would bring an end to the work stoppage that involves approximately 50,000 members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers urban operations unit, otherwise known as CUPW, and Canada Post.

The collective agreement covering CUPW and Canada Post expired in January of this year and both parties have been bargaining since October 2010. That is a good number of months. It is not as if the parties just started to bargain a short while ago and we are now introducing legislation. They have been at this since October 2010. They have done their best to bridge the gaps between them. They have done their best to agree on the points they can, and they have come to an impasse. They cannot agree on what remains to be done to bring this to a satisfactory conclusion.

• (1150)

Throughout these months, they have used the resources that the Canada Labour Code provides for. They have used the personnel to bring them along. Therefore, it is unfair to say that there has not been a sufficient period of time for the parties to reason their way through without harm to themselves or the economy. However, there comes a point, when the parties are unable to resolve their differences, that there must be an intervention of some kind that ensures that the impasse is bridged.

I can say that when those talks were stalled or at an impasse, a conciliation officer was appointed. The conciliation period was even further extended until early May and, during that time, the conciliation officer again met with the parties. Throughout the month of May, a mediator from the labour program's Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service met frequently with the parties. It was not a one-off meeting. It was not just an occasional meeting. It was a concentrated effort to try to resolve the differences and the gaps that existed between the parties.

However, despite all of these efforts at mediation and conciliation, and the Minister of Labour meeting with both leaders, the Minister of Labour also used her offices, her person and character to intervene with both leaders to try to bring them to a place where the matter could be settled. However, CUPW announced its intent to strike. Following the announcement, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers began rotating strikes. This then led to Canada Post later locking out union members.

We can see what effect this is having right across our country. Sometimes collective bargaining does hit an impasse. It is something we need to realize, to understand and accept. Employees can pressure employers by walking out. That is a fundamental right and nobody disputes that right. It is enshrined and it is there.

Employers can also bring pressure by locking out workers and trying to carry on business without them. That is something they are entitled to do. The law and the Constitution provides for that. They can do that and they have done that. Notwithstanding the fact that they have implemented these strategies, they have not had a resolve.

I will quickly draw attention to the fact that Canada Post spends about \$3 billion a year on goods and services. It contributes \$6.6 billion to the country's GDP. It is not a small matter when those types of services, economies and expenditures are interfered with.

Canada Post has countless industries that rely on its services. Canadian retailers depend on Canada Post to reach their customers. The Canadian magazine industry relies on Canada Post for most of its distribution. Therefore, any disruption does something to its bottom line, to its business and to its customer base.

There is no question that Canada Post offers an essential lifeline to Canadians in rural and remote areas. My riding represents a number of those. While rural letter carriers are not part of the current bargaining dispute, rural communities are still acutely affected due to the fact that no sorting or bulk distribution of mail is taking place.

In fact, in my own riding of Souris—Moose Mountain, I have received correspondence and calls on this work stoppage. I received a letter from a constituent of mine who I know very well and who is someone who does not always agree with the viewpoint of the current government or the viewpoints that I may have from time to time and is quite able to express those differences in a point of view or opinion. I think what the constituent says in this letter to me captures what many Canadians would like to say and, in fact, are saying from coast to coast.

In this instance, she has written to me urging me for a resolution to this dispute and calling on the government to introduce back to work legislation. Why? This particular constituent owns a small newspaper business and her business is suffering immensely due to the work stoppage at Canada Post. She is calling on this government to do the right thing and to stand up for small business owners who rely on Canada Post to keep their businesses making money.

• (1155)

I will read portions of the letter. She says:

Please add my voice to your growing list of Canadians who want our Canadian majority government under your leadership to pass legislation forcing the CUPW members back to work so that Canada Post can function normally.

She goes on to say:

We own a small newspaper business in the riding of...for Souris—Moose Mountain, and we are unable to mail our newspapers to our readers this morning. ... We have staff employed whom we need, and they need to be employed. We have customers buying ads which help pay for a community newspaper. All of these Canadians are being inconvenienced. Also, if we turn to using alternative methods to distribute our newspapers we risk having our local post office lose profits and possibly become closed.

Those are the realities of what impact this is having on Canadians. She is urging this government to pass legislation that would bring the postal workers back to work so her readers can continue to receive their newspapers. If this work stoppage goes on much longer, it will have a negative impact on her business, as she outlines, and other businesses and her employees. That is a fact. It is something we must not forget. There are not two parties to this dispute. There are many parties to the dispute and there is the best interest of the country that we must keep in mind. That is why we must find a solution where a solution cannot be found by the parties themselves. It must be one that we bring them to, even if it means legislation like the legislation we are proposing before this House today.

My constituent expressed how impressed she was that this government moved forward with back to work legislation for Air Canada and she expressed hope that we would act in like manner with Canada Post. We have, which is exactly why we have acted and introduced back to work legislation to bring this work stoppage to an end.

The same constituent sent me another letter. She wrote:

I had previously contacted each of your offices explaining the hardship that this postal disruption was causing to rural communities and small businesses such as our own.... I want to thank you for listening to Canadians, as I know there were many speaking out in favour of government legislation to end this disruption.

She does not speak to us just for herself, for her business or for her community. She speaks for the broader Canadian right across this country who is being affected by what the parties themselves are imposing on Canadians or a hapless bystander looking at what is going on between the parties and saying that they see no end in sight or any resolve to the impasse, that they would like to see a responsible government take some action to provide the means to bring this to a conclusion so they are no longer hurt, so our economy is no longer hurt and so they can continue to do what average Canadians want to do. They want to work hard, make a profit, spend the money back in their communities and cause our economy to continue.

The constituent writes, "Personally, I believe in the right of union members to negotiate and strike under unfair labour practices". Nobody is denying the fact that the right exists. Nobody is denying that the right must be protected, but not at all costs. It is not an overwhelming right that takes over all other rights. It has some limitations.

• (1200)

"However, when negotiations drag on", she says, "to the point they threaten the livelihood of Canadians or the good health of Canadians, then we need a government that will legislate".

In the legislation that is proposed, it is not legislation that does not allow for some objectivity in terms of what the arbiter must do. It appoints an arbiter for a final offer selection that is to be made by both parties. It says that the employer and the union must each submit to the arbiter a list of matters on which the employer and the union were in agreement as of a date specified by the arbiter, the things with which they are in common, the things on which they have bridged the gap, the things that they say they can do, and also a list of matters remaining in dispute, and a final offer in respect of the matters referred to that are in dispute and then the selection will be made. It is a process that has unfolded to allow for the parties to put their best case forward in that area and then a decision will be made.

My constituent is not alone in her comments, in the way she feels or in her call for the introduction of this legislation. The Minister of Labour has been inundated with correspondence from stakeholders and members of the public looking for resolution to this dispute. I am sure if all members were fair with this House, they would say they that too had been receiving calls with respect to this dispute. What is required is a balance in terms of how we approach resolving the issues between the parties in the dispute to the benefit of all Canadians.

Government Orders

Small and medium-sized businesses, especially home-based businesses, are feeling the effects of this postal service disruption and the time has come to protect them.

Charities are also being hurt because they cannot fundraise and donations are being lost. It is a serious consequence. How long do we let it go? The longer we let it go the more difficult it is for them and the more difficult it is for businesses. Therefore, at some point we must say that a reasonable time has passed and now it is time to take action.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, CFIB, estimated that small and medium-sized businesses could expect to see a loss of around \$200 for each day mail service is interrupted. I would say that in a number of other cases where there is specialized services a loss is even far greater and in excess of that.

The Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the CNIB, which we heard here today, estimates that its losses may be as much as \$250,000 at this time of year because the majority of its donations are received through the mail service. What about the CNIB? What about the things it does? What about its financial base? Who will consider that? Who will take best interests into account? The people in this House, the parliamentarians, the legislators, need to take CNIB's interest into account in this situation and in this dispute.

We have all heard of the effect this has had on live animals that Canada Post had in the system for delivery. Many of those shipments were being shipped by businesses that had no other shipping alternatives and money has now been lost.

Many large corporations have been able to find alternate means of communicating with customers and clients. That may continue even after the strike is over, so there may be some losses to the parties that they do not yet envision. However, small and medium-sized businesses still rely heavily on traditional postal services. This work stoppage is crippling for these smaller businesses.

The effects of this work stoppage are far-reaching and the government recognizes that and has responded by introducing the legislation that is before the House now.

The most vulnerable of Canadians are receiving minimal service and it is time to restore full service to all Canadians. Businesses are hurting and jobs are on the line. We cannot allow this work stoppage to continue. We received a strong mandate from Canadians and we need to remain focused on the economic recovery. We are committed to the completion and protection of our economic recovery.

There is evidence that this work stoppage is causing serious harm to small businesses across the country. This government is acting to protect the public interest and the country's economy as a whole by tabling this bill to ensure the resumption and continuation of postal services.

• (1205)

Not only would this bill restore mail services to Canadians who desperately need it, it also includes guiding principles which provide the direction for the arbiter to ensure that Canadian taxpayers are not left with the bill for Canada Post's pension plan.

Government Orders

In closing, it is important to remember that as we recover from our economic downturn, it is more important than ever that we encourage co-operative and productive workplaces. I hope all members will join me in the support of this important piece of legislation.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, all of us certainly want people to go back to work at Canada Post, but we are very concerned about there being a fair collective agreement process. Unfortunately, this back-to-work legislation has completely nullified that.

After listening to the member, he has put forward some erroneous information. Canada Post is a very profitable organization. It has given back to the general revenue, to the people of Canada and the Government of Canada almost \$2 billion over the last 15 years. I remember visiting with representatives from Canada Post just a few months ago and they showed me the slide that pointed out the revenue they produce. It is not a matter of the corporation not having the ability and capacity to deal with issues.

I want to correct the member. There is an issue about a two-tier wage system in which starting employees on the Canada Post side would get 18% less in wages. I want to ask him why he thinks that in any way is fair and why anyone in his riding or anywhere else would accept that?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, first of all, making a profit, as the member for Toronto Centre said, is not something that should be looked at in an unfavourable way. It is the type of thing that allows corporations to hire employees, continue to do business and remain viable.

Of course profits are made, but at the same time, we have to be mindful of the fact that over \$100 million is lost as the strike continues simply by the volume of mail declining. Many companies and consumers are finding alternative options to the postal service for a variety of services and some of them will never go back to Canada Post. The reality is we want to be sure that the ability to earn profit is something the corporation can do while being fair to its employees and its operation.

The legislation would provide for wage increases that would be incorporated in the agreements and would allow for a certain objective framework for the arbiter to take into consideration to ensure the long-term viability of the corporation, the employees' pensions plans and the kinds of things that will keep them competitive going into the future. That is an appropriate type of consideration to have.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a point that needs to be emphasized, and I look to the member for a response, is the fact that it is Canada Post that made the decision on the lockout. The government quite possibly would have been aware that Canada Post was even contemplating that.

Does the member believe that Canada Post made the decision on its own to conduct the lockout without the government being aware of the fact that it was going to be taking that sort of action? Does the member believe the government had no idea that Canada Post was going to lock out employees?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, both parties are independent of the government and they take such action as they are entitled to

under the Canada Labour Code. Some decide to go by way of disruptive rotating strikes and the employer has the right, of course, to lock people out.

Let me say this. If I run a business, when there are rotating strikes and I lock out striking employees in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Winnipeg and Regina on a repetitive basis, that is disruptive to the types and levels of services that people expect and perhaps at some point it is best to simply shut it down if parties cannot come to a conclusion.

They can do what they want to do, but our responsibility kicks in at some point when the parties are behaving in such a fashion that they are not able to reach an amicable settlement, which is always best and what we would prefer, and Canadians are bearing the brunt of their individual exercises of power. At some point the government is obligated to step in and attempt to find a path to resolve it to the benefit of all parties, the employer, employees and all Canadians who depend on that service. Whether employees are locked out or strike in certain areas and disrupt services, the effect is the same on all Canadians. It is unacceptable.

• (1210)

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to ask my colleague from Souris—Moose Mountain a question in terms of the postal bill that is before us.

I have heard a number of the opposition MPs speak about undermining the negotiation process with this bill. Does this legislation actually undermine the collective bargaining process?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is, of course not. The parties are still able to bargain collectively and reach their own conclusion at any time. This is not something that anyone would impose on them arbitrarily. However, there is a time when action must be taken.

The parties are encouraged even now to see their way through and come to a conclusion. As we know, Air Canada was able to do that without the necessity of legislation to go forward. People were disrupted and there is an understanding of that. As they are entitled to exercise their rights, there will be some disruptions. However, at some point, given all of the circumstances, given where we are in our economic recovery and where the country is headed, there is a time and a place where decisive action must be taken.

I think Canadians are looking for this government to take some decisive action and have an objective plan in place for the parties to resolve their dispute so that Canadians can go on with their lives and their business, which they are entitled to do.

[Translation]

Mrs. Djaouda Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since this morning, I have been listening to the speeches of the hon. members opposite about Canada Post and its workers. One hon. member raised the issue of minor services.

I have before me today's issue of *Quorum*, which contains an article that I would like to bring to the hon. member's attention. It reads:

...lockout or no lockout, these days, many Canadians are still finding envelopes in their mailboxes. Under an agreement reached well before the dispute began, Canada Post workers committed to distributing government cheques for various benefits such as social assistance, old age security and income assistance for families.

According to the union, close to 9,000 of its members will process and deliver over 2 million cheques this month. Unionized workers will not be paid for delivering the cheques but will receive a lump sum of \$50.

From my analysis, it seems that Canada Post has begun a misinformation campaign of sorts. People need to know that negotiations are happening between the two parties, despite the fact that the media is saying otherwise.

By way of evidence, Canada Post contacted the finance issues subcommittee to find out how much bargaining demands would cost. Canada Post also indicated that it had questions about the recent proposals, despite the fact that it rejected those proposals as it has been doing for eight months now. Canada Post is waiting for the back-to-work bill to pass and has been hoping this would happen for several months.

● (1215)

[English]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, first of all, those relying on the post office to receive a cheque or a benefit would certainly have some anxiety. I am sure they were ill at ease with the disruption of services and rotating strikes, notwithstanding any agreement. However, it is not just pension cheques, there are other things going through the mail that people rely on and are most anxious about.

It is not as if the parties have not had time to negotiate. They have been negotiating since October 2010. They have had the services of mediators and conciliators, but they have not been able to reach an agreement. What they were doing has been disruptive to our economy and to Canadians as a whole. The time has come for us to act and to act decisively.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we are being asked to approve a motion that would expedite the passage of back-to-work legislation that was introduced only yesterday.

How can this House vote on a process to end the debate that has not even started yet, a debate on a bill that we have not even been able to discuss in our caucus? I suppose coming from the Conservatives, a party where independent political thinking is rarely apparent and never encouraged, that should not be surprising. The Prime Minister muzzles his MPs in his own caucus and tells them what they can say, when and where.

In our caucus, though, we actually believe in the vital role that Parliament plays in the legislative process. We take seriously our role in the deliberative process of the House of Commons which manifests itself in the debate of bills and motions.

All too often with the Conservative government, legislation contains poison pills that are not apparent from a cursory review. I do not need to remind members in this House about the purported economic recovery bill from the last Parliament that included sections gutting pay equity, killing the court challenges program and other provisions that had nothing to do with helping us get out of the current recession.

Government Orders

Asking us to vote on something before it has been adequately debated is simply not on, and for good reason. Here is what a former member of Parliament had to say on the subject:

—if closure can be resorted to in order to implement these rule changes, and can be used so as to alter fundamentally the very nature and role of the House of Commons, then we are in a very sorry state indeed in so far as democracy and freedom are concerned.

Who said that? It was none other than former Conservative leader, Robert Stanfield. Mr. Stanfield was right. It is contempt of our rights as members of Parliament. It is contempt of Parliament as a democratic and representative institution. It is contempt of Canadian labour laws. It is contempt of Canada's signature on UN and ILO conventions. It is contempt of workers' rights in our country.

What is at issue here is the impending legislation that seeks to impose an end to a dispute between Canada Post and the 54,000 members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. It is a bill that diminishes and constrains hard fought for workers' rights, a bill that the NDP certainly has no intention of supporting.

The right to bargain collectively is recognized through international human rights conventions that Canada is a signatory to, yet once again we find ourselves in a position where the Conservatives are violating Canada's ILO obligations and using unnecessary legislation to end a labour dispute.

The government had a choice. As the owner of Canada Post, it had the option of instructing management to resume postal service to the public, get back to the bargaining table and negotiate a lasting resolution to this dispute. That is what it should have done.

Instead, the government chose to introduce back-to-work legislation to show utter disrespect for workers' rights. This is exactly what the employer, Canada Post was waiting for.

Instead of negotiating in good faith, Canada Post Corporation will be provided with a government appointed arbitrator who has clear instructions to side with the employer and roll back rates and benefits that postal workers have struggled to achieve for decades.

Let us have a look at how this unfolded. On June 2, in an effort to persuade Canada Post to abandon its demand for significant concessions and instead negotiate fair solutions, the union began limited, rotating strikes at various locations throughout the country.

Aware of the effects of the service disruption on the public, the union chose action that would minimize the inconvenience to Canadians.

On June 6, the union agreed to suspend all strike activity and continue to negotiate, but Canada Post rejected that offer. Indeed, on the morning of June 14, the Minister of Labour said that there was no need for back-to-work legislation because the strike was rotating and mail was still moving.

That evening, Canada Post took the draconian step of locking out all workers and shutting down postal services entirely.

Government Orders

The very next day, the Minister of Labour announced that she would give Canada Post the legislation that it had been waiting for. For the workers of Canada Post, this is a profound violation of their right to strike and their right to free collective bargaining, a process that works fully 95% of the time, ending disputes without any type of work disruption.

When the government interferes in that process, it undermines the democratic rights of workers. It is a heavy-handed way of forcing a resolution to a dispute that could have been resolved at the bargaining table. It takes away the level playing field and instead tips the scale squarely in favour of the employer.

I have to say that in this dispute it was particularly insulting to the workers and to all Canadians, frankly, when the Minister of Labour decided to speak out and inform the employer that all it had to do was stop the movement of mail and she would introduce a back-to-work bill.

Canada Post heard that message loud and clear, and immediately locked out the members of CUPW.

• (1220)

New Democrats will not support this draconian measure and we certainly do not support the underhanded partisan conduct of the minister.

What we do support is a strong national and public postal system, a postal system that has made \$1.7 billion in the last 15 years and paid \$1.2 billion in dividends and income tax to the federal government and a postal system that is, by any measure, socially and financially sound. That is right, Canada Post is very profitable and by keeping Canada Post profitable, the postal workers actually save the public money.

While it is true that multinational courier companies regularly lobby the government to deregulate Canada Post and open up the letter market to competition, the truth is Canadians do not support it. The 2008 strategic review of Canada Post reported that there appeared to be little or no public support for the privatization or deregulation of Canada Post. Our NDP caucus stands united with Canadians in opposing any move to deregulate and privatize our national postal service.

Our postal service is profitable and productive. Unlike many companies, Canada Post has increased its productivity in the last two years. This productivity has, in turn, allowed Canada Post to keep postal rates low. Our 59¢ stamp is one of the biggest bargains in the entire industrialized world. People in Japan pay almost \$1 Canadian to send a domestic letter. In Austria it is equivalent to 88¢. In Germany it is 78¢. While offering a much more affordable postal system, Canada Post is at the same time making profits and paying substantial dividends and income tax into public coffers.

Canada Post insists that it needs big changes in order to deal with a 17% decline in volume of mail. However, letter volume has only declined 7.2% between 2006 and 2009. Some of that 7.2% decline was due to the economic recession. Figures for 2010 have not yet been released, but volumes are likely to rebound somewhat as Internet purchasing becomes more commonplace. Although volume has marginally decreased, it is hardly the 17% figure that Canada Post is trying to sell us.

I will talk a bit about what is at stake in this dispute, not just for the workers at Canada Post but, indeed, for all Canadian workers. As we know all too well, an injury to one is an injury to all. This is a dispute between the CUPW and Canada Post, but there is a bigger fight going on here. When unions take a risk and stand to be counted on an issue of national importance, all Canadians benefit. It has been 30 years since the brave members of CUPW went on strike for 42 days to take a stand for paid maternity leave, and won. This was a major victory for all workers as the government and other employers were forced to provide the same leave for their employees, not too far down the road.

Today, these honourable union members are taking a stand for future generations. They are fighting against the corporate impulse to race to the bottom. They are standing up for fair wages and working conditions. Canada Post is determined to set a starting wage for new employees at a rate 18% less than that of current employees. For young workers who are just starting out in the working world, many of whom have a college or university education, the message is, "You don't deserve the same salary as your co-workers". Whatever happened to the principle of decent pay for decent work? The income inequality sought by Canada Post is a slap in the face.

What about sick leave? Canada Post wants to eliminate sick leave for all employees and impose an unfair short-term disability plan. Under this plan, workers would have to apply to a private insurance company if they were sick or injured for more than one week. They want to eliminate short-term sick days and instead force workers to use personal days when they are ill. The existing sick leave plan, where sick days are earned, has been in place and working well since 1968. Almost half a century later, Canada Post suddenly decides the plan needs to be eliminated.

Postal workers are standing up for safe working conditions. Technological change, the modernization of Canada Post and five years of cutting jobs and not filling vacancies has consequences. In the last session of Parliament, I spoke about a woman letter carrier from my riding in Hamilton Mountain who suffered heat exhaustion because of extra hours on the job. Instead of allowing other employees to work regular hours, Canada Post forced its employees to work overtime. Postal workers are being seriously hurt and this practice must come to an end.

Then there are pension issues. Canada Post wants to turn back the clock on employee pensions by increasing the age at which employees can retire without penalty and capping pension indexing at 75% the rate of inflation for all newly hired employees.

• (1225)

In 1981 CUPW stood up for all working Canadians and fought for social benefits, in that case, maternity leave, which Canadians now consider a basic right. The women and men of CUPW are again fighting for the rights of all Canadians working to retire with dignity and respect.

Canadians are worried about their retirement security. Pension plans and retirement savings have been hit hard by this recession. The government has made it clear it has no interest in meaningfully improving the Canada pension plan. Now it is siding with employers in their determination to gut workplace pensions as well.

Pensions are deferred wages. They belong to the employees. Workers often sacrifice wage improvements and other benefits to secure a pension plan that will provide for a dignified and secure retirement.

One-quarter of a million seniors in the country currently live in poverty. It is unconscionable, it is indefensible and it is largely because CPP is inadequate and those seniors did not have a union on their side, fighting for a decent pension.

As the boomers hit their retirement years, fair and adequate pensions are increasingly an issue that matters to all of us. Unless we, as parliamentarians, are happy to preside over the creation of an even more appallingly poor generation of seniors, pensions must be protected and improved.

The attack on pensions by Canada Post and by far too many other private and public sector employers is shortsighted and fiscally and socially irresponsible.

I applaud the women and men of CUPW who are taking a stand by protecting not just their own pensions but the pensions of those workers who will follow. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers is determined to protect pension provisions for those workers who cannot yet conceive of the day they will need it. Just as they did when Canada Post denied the maternity leave decades ago, they are fighting for fair working conditions and benefits for all workers of all ages.

Fair wages, sick leave, a safe and healthy workplace and a secure pension are all fundamental worker rights. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers is right to be defending these rights against attacks by their employer, and they have done so responsibly and with dignity.

Even though the law allows them to fully withdraw their labour after 72 hours' notice, they decided to have rotating strikes in an effort to minimize the impact on Canadians. They never stopped providing service to the public. People were still able to use the postal service, with the knowledge that their mail would arrive. Before Canada Post locked them out, only 51% of the population experienced a delay and there was never a full stoppage in mail service.

Is it not ironic that while the Minister of Labour was introducing legislation to order CUPW members back to work, members of the union were already on the streets working, volunteering their time to ensure the delivery of Canada pension plan, old age security and child benefits cheques, as well as provincial social assistance cheques in Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Northwest Territories, ensuring that our most vulnerable Canadians were not impacted by their employer's decision to lock them out.

I know my time is running out. However, before I wrap up, I will like to read into the record a commentary that was written by James Clancy, National President of the National Union of Public and General Employees, a union which, at this time, is running a

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campaign entitled "All Together Now", reminding us that we are all in this together. This is our future, our children's future and our grandchildren's future.

The commentary states:

Back in the day, post offices were the heart of communities. People would go there to receive mail from afar, settle bills and accounts and, most likely, catch up on the on-goings in the neighbourhood.

Our postal service has been a central part of our country since it was first introduced by the federal government in 1867. It has been a shining example of a valuable public service—one that is often overlooked and, certainly, under-appreciated.

Designed to serve the common good, it connects Canadians to each other as well as the global community.

It's affordable. No matter where you live in this vast landscape, the cost to mail a letter is the same for everyone. Do you really think the costs are the same from Iqaluit to Edmonton than from Ottawa to Kingston? But when we pool our resources, it works.

It's accessible. Despite more recent service delivery cutbacks, every community has access to postal service. Mailboxes are the furniture of our city streets. Post offices can be found in every town.

And it's accountable. Since the establishment of the postal service, it's transformed into a crown corporation of the federal government. The CEO of Canada Post is appointed by the Minister responsible for Canada Post. As citizens, and voters, we have the ability to contribute to the vision and direction of this service.

For these reasons and many more, I am urging all Canadians to pay attention to what is happening in the current round of bargaining between Canada Post and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW).

It's not just about wages and working conditions, although both are important, it's about the future of this public service, one that benefits each of us, our families and our businesses.

● (1230)

There are some important choices being made during these negotiations. Canada Post has the choice to continue on its old path, with a singular focus on postal delivery as though the world and the way of doing business hasn't changed dramatically over the last decade or more. Or it can look to the future, to see the opportunities and get back in the game.

To be able to compete in this recovering economic climate, we need to see that the leadership of Canada Post are up to the task. For sure, Canada Post needs to modernize. And, thankfully, it is looking to update its operations; years of under-investment in equipment and facilities require this to happen.

But what we are hearing about is the company's strategy to use modernization as a Trojan horse to gut the workforce. Canada Post plans to invest \$2 billion in new machines and work methods but eliminate 7000 jobs.

This doesn't make any good sense. One of the best assets of a national public service is the investment in a well trained workforce. If we're going to see any innovation, we're going to need these people more than ever!

The real question now is whether or not Canada Post is up to the job to be the innovator the country needs. There is a massive opportunity for CEO Deepak Chopra to make a transformative shift in our postal system. Now is the perfect time for Canada Post to open itself to the future, to invest and expand.

All we have to do is take a look at what is happening around the globe to see how other countries are dealing with similar problems. They are expanding and reinvesting. Expansion of services will allow Canada Post to share the benefits of its modernization with the public by preserving and improving postal services and employment opportunities. Service expansion will help generate the much-needed revenue to keep enriching and enhancing products and the level of service for all Canadians.

Banking, expansion of parcel delivery, using current retail outlets to offer more services, as well as reinstating more door-to-door delivery so that every Canadian is provided with the same level of service are other well-founded and time-tested examples that Canada Post can adopt.

And these ideas are exactly what CUPW is proposing in negotiations. The union is not bargaining for the status quo. It is bargaining to create a solid and profitable corporation—a modern post, powered by the people—to serve the best interests of Canadians for decades to come—

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It's this kind of forward-thinking that, our postal system, and our country needs. We need to support CUPW in its efforts and make sure Canada Post is listening.

I am proud to say that all members of the NDP caucus will be standing in solidarity with the workers of CUPW. I urge all members in the House to join us and stand up for the values and principles on which our country was built. It is a vision of Canada that is worth fighting for.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move:

That this question be now put.

• (1235)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I agree with my colleague from Hamilton Mountain with regard to the actions of the government over the last two weeks. Although there were two different types of drama, certainly both were an attack on organized labour in our country. One was against Air Canada when the government came forward with legislation even though there were really no delays and other options were available for airline passengers. Then there is this legislation that is really, for the most part, egregious and ties an arbitrator's hands in very important areas.

For my own clarification, would my colleague comment on whether her party believes there are times when back to work legislation is necessary and could she expand on the conditions that would prompt her party to support such legislation?

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, as my good friend from Nova Scotia will know, the NDP supports free collective bargaining, which should have been allowed to continue in this instance and with Air Canada beforehand. In the last Parliament, members will remember that the same issue arose with respect to the Teamsters.

This is about a fundamental right of workers. It is about free collective bargaining. We should not be negotiating that away in the House. Even worse, the Minister of Labour, when she brought in back to work legislation, was actually taking sides. I do not know if the member has had an opportunity to read the bill, but there are provisions in the bill that favour the employer. Apparently we are limiting debate on the provisions today. The minister is going to give workers less in wage improvements that already had been agreed at the negotiating table. How can this be a fair process?

All 308 of us here in the House have members of CUPW in our ridings. I would welcome members of the Conservative side of the House talking to members of CUPW in their ridings and getting direction from them, not from the Prime Minister's Office. I urge members to ask workers in their communities if they should have the right to engage in free collective bargaining and to arrive at a settlement at the negotiating table. I bet every single one of them would say yes.

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, constituents in my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla have already shared with me that they have now signed up for online billing and banking services as a result of this strike and, as such, no longer have any use or need for Canada Post services going forward. I believe everyone in the House would agree that this will jeopardize the long-term viability of Canada Post.

I would like to ask the hon. member opposite why her party continues to advocate a position that will undermine the long-term interests of an institution that so many Canadians rely on.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, I do not know who wrote that question for the member, but I appreciate his putting it. However, how can he suggest that so many Canadians rely on this service after starting his question by saying that no one is using the mail any more because everyone is using the Internet?

I feel sorry for people in the member's community if all they are getting in the mail are bills and invoices. In my riding of Hamilton Mountain, people have an expansive social life. They communicate with people from right across this country and the globe.

When we look at the facts, it is true that letter mail volumes are declining slowly, but the letter is by no means dead and buried. In fact, transactional letter mail volumes are 10% higher than in 1997, the last time the CUPW was on strike.

I completely agree with the premise that the services provided by CUPW are still vitally important in our communities, but I would encourage the member to rethink the front end of his question where he contradicted himself and suggested that no one was using Canada Post any more.

• (1240)

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the history cited by the member for Hamilton Mountain with respect to labour relations was very informative. I hope all members paid attention.

The collective bargaining relationship between the parties is a finely balanced one, but in this event now, the government has clearly weighed in on behalf of the employer. I would ask my colleague to comment on what motivation the employer would have to pay attention to union demands and union strategies in the negotiations when it knew that the government was going to weigh in on its behalf? Would she take a moment to discuss a little further what impact this weighing in by the government will have on this finely balanced relationship?

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour has put his finger precisely on what is at issue here.

Collective bargaining is supposed to be about negotiating agreements on a level playing field. I do not think any of us are naive enough to think that the playing field is ever entirely level, because all of the economic clout is on the side of the employer. Nonetheless, collective bargaining is supposed to be a freely negotiated process leading to a collective agreement by both sides.

It was not that long ago that the Minister of Labour stood up in the House and said that we did not need back to work legislation because mail was still being delivered. Canada Post heard that message loud and clear. It was not the workers who went out on strike, but the corporation that locked out its workers. Exactly as the minister had implied, she then immediately brought in back to work legislation, which has brought us to the point we are at today. The minister clearly undermined free collective bargaining.

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Canada is a signatory to ILO labour conventions. As Minister of Labour, she should be upholding these. Instead, she has been undermining them consistently, first with Air Canada and now with Canada Post. I think she should resign.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was a solicitor in Fort McMurray for some period of time and owned some businesses there. I have to be honest that we used Canada Post a lot. In fact, I would say that for 20 to 30 years we used Canada Post more than any other business in our area. We received cheques from businesses and sent out bills and did advertising that way, sending out millions of flyers and promotional material. I can assure you that there was such an integral lock with Canada Post that the relationship continued for 35 years before our family business closed down, in particular our printing and sign shop.

Clearly, every single day that Canada Post workers do not deliver the mail, it has a dramatic impact on the small businesses in this country, who employ a huge number of people.

First, I would ask the member, what do I say to those small businesses facing closure? It is a serious concern. They are not operating with the margins of large companies but with small margins. What do I say to them when they get to work and do not have any mail to open, do not have any cheques to deposit and do not have any money coming in? As a result, they will suffer hardships.

Second, what kind of evidence do the members have who have suggested there was any collusion between the minister or this government and Canada Post management? It is absolutely ludicrous.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, first of all, it is refreshing to have a Conservative member say that yes, indeed, Canada Post plays a vital role in our communities. I think it is the first acknowledgement of that I have heard today and I think he is absolutely right.

Unfortunately, this labour dispute is not just hurting small businesses but also charities that raise most of their money or receive most of their donations by mail. That is why the workers of CUPW did not go on strike at the same time. They have had rotating strikes so that mail could still be delivered to those businesses, charities, seniors and families from coast to coast to coast.

When the minister signaled she was willing to bring in back to work legislation if all mail delivery stopped, that was when Canada Post locked out the workers. That was when businesses, charities, families and seniors were seriously hurt. It was not from the actions taken by the workers but from the actions by Canada Post, as it read the signals from the minister.

● (1245)

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have risen in the House this session and I want to take the opportunity to thank my constituents in the riding of Prince Albert for their support again in this election. It was a hard-fought battle and I really appreciate their support.

Today I rise to support the legislation introduced by the Minister of Labour. Bill C-6, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services will protect our economic recovery

and help the CUPW and Canada Post Corporation come to a lasting settlement.

Our government would prefer the two parties to resolve their issues and come to an agreement on their own. The best solution is when an employer and a union can come to a solution themselves. In fact, over 90% of labour negotiations in Canada are settled without ending in work stoppages. Failing an agreement, our goal is to be fair to the 50,000 urban postal workers while taking into account the welfare of all vulnerable Canadians and small- and medium-size businesses that depend on regular postal service.

Canada Post plays a significant role in Canada's economy. It spends about \$3 billion a year on goods and services, thereby supporting an additional 30,000 jobs in the economy. It contributes \$6.6 billion to the country's GDP and directly employs over 70,000 full- and part-time employees. A prolonged work stoppage could have some really negative effects on our economy.

Canada Post's three most important business lines are mail, parcels and direct marketing. The direct marketing sector represents \$1.4 billion of Canada Post's revenue. During the economic slowdown or downturn, this sector suffered severe financial losses. A prolonged work stoppage would impact the sector by preventing large Canadian retailers from reaching their customers. This could result in decreased sales, which could translate into reduced employment.

The Canadian magazine industry would also be severely compromised, as it relies on Canada Post for most of its distribution.

Canada Post offers an essential lifeline to Canadians in rural and remote areas. Even where rural letter carriers are not necessarily affected by the current bargaining dispute, rural communities could still be affected as there would be no sorting or bulking distribution of post to rural communities for delivery.

People with disabilities have transportation and accessibility barriers that may affect their ability to receive goods and services. Shopping online and catalogue shopping still rely on the postal service to get goods from sellers to buyers.

I have received letters from constituents. It was interesting to receive a letter before the lockout and one afterward from the same constituent, which I would like to read for the record. The letter before the lockout read:

Please Sir, if there is anything you can do to stop this strike, I would really appreciate it. I am a small business owner here in Prince Albert, SK. We literally ship and receive 100's of packages every month through Canada Post. This strike could shut us down affecting my own single income family, my sister & family and my parents. We pay between \$6-\$13 to ship through Canada Post...to ship the same package through UPS/Canpar, etc is between \$33-\$46. This would put us out of business.

I urge you to please do whatever is in your power to stop this strike from going forward.

Thank you!

After the lockout, the same person sent me a letter, which read:

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I would just like to say that I'm incredibly disappointed that Canada Post was allowed to lock out the workers and especially with no notice to the Canadian public. While I was not in favour of the CUPW strike, I did feel that at least they gave the public notice and mail was still flowing even if it was slower. Canada Post stated that they would decrease to 3 days a week delivery, but then suddenly dropped all deliveries. This was completely unfair to the Canadian public and businesses. They should not have been allowed to do this with no notice whatsoever. I have a lot of mail stuck in the system now that I would have shipped other methods. I am incredibly disappointed with how Canada Post has dealt with this. The CUPW was at least working to not interrupt all of the Canadian public & businesses. It was Canada Post who did that. For this reason, I am very disappointed. I would hope that this policy would be looked at into for future reference. It should not be legal for a crown corporation to completely shut down business.

Here we see someone who has actually been impacted by the slowdown and the shutdown. Here we see what can happen to a small business when all of a sudden it does not have the service. That is why we have to look at what the minister has done and move forward quickly to make sure that we do not lose these jobs, people and small businesses. Some of the most vulnerable aspects of our economy could be affected by a prolonged work stoppage.

The Canada Labour Code has been built on labour legislation and a policy that promotes the common well-being and rights of employers and workers. It does this through negotiations of terms and conditions of employment and the constructive settlement of disputes.

● (1250)

Since the Conciliation Act of 1900, the labour program has had a mandate to help prevent and resolve labour disputes. Canadian labour relations have benefited from neutral third parties who conciliate, mediate and arbitrate. That was the case in the recent CUPW and Canada Post dispute.

The collective agreement covering all units of approximately 50,000 postal workers expired January 31, 2011, despite the fact that the parties have been bargaining since October of the previous year.

A conciliation officer was then appointed and met with both parties throughout February and March. The conciliation period was extended from April 1 to May 3, 2011.

On May 5, a mediator was appointed, and throughout the month an officer of the labour program's Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service frequently met with both parties. Despite all this work, a work stoppage is now in effect.

We can let events control us until the economy goes into a tailspin, or we can take decisive action on behalf of Canadians. This is what the legislation proposes to do.

First of all, it puts an end to the growing uncertainty around Canada postal services. The act also imposes a four-year contract of new pay rate increases. This will mean a 1.75% increase as of February 1, 2011, a 1.5% increase as of February 1, 2012, a 2% increase as of February 1, 2013, and a 2% increase as of February 1, 2014.

It also provides a final offer selection, a binding mechanism, on all outstanding matters.

Furthermore, in making the selection of final offer, the arbitrator is to be guided by the need for terms and conditions of employment that are consistent with those in comparable postal industries and that

will provide the necessary degree of flexibility to ensure the short- and long-term economic viability and competitiveness of Canada Post, maintain the health and safety of its workers and ensure the sustainability of its pension plan.

The terms and conditions of employment must also take into account that: (a) the solvency ratio of the pension plan must not decline as a direct result of the new collective agreement, and (b) that the Canada Post Corporation must, without recourse to undue increases in postal rates, operate efficiently, improve productivity and meet acceptable standards of service.

It has been nearly 14 years since the last Canada Post work stoppage. Every avenue has been explored to help bring a full and lasting resolution to this dispute.

In the absence of a solution reached by the parties, something that was clearly hoped for, the proposed legislation will bring quick resolution to the dispute. It will safeguard our economy and ensure that Canadian businesses and vulnerable Canadians do not suffer.

Our government has taken steps to ensure the efficient delivery of federal services and benefits to Canadians. We have reserved courier services, set up the early release of some benefit payments, and provided in-person delivery through regional Service Canada Centres.

We are doing this because Canadians want leadership. As parliamentarians, we have an obligation to act on behalf of Canadians.

We need to keep our economy working and build on our recent gains. We must maintain the momentum. Let us support the proposed legislation and bring peace to Canada's postal services for the months and years to come.

In my riding it is very important that we see this dispute come to a settlement. In talking to farmers or small businesses or people in small towns, a lot of their invoicing, a lot of their billing is actually done through the mail. When they cannot send a bill, they cannot get paid. They cannot pay their supplier. It is a domino effect that needs to end.

The only way this can end is through this proper legislation. I encourage my colleagues to support it. Let us get on with doing the business of the people of Canada and let us get these two parties back to work.

● (1255)

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share something with all hon. members of the House of Commons and, in particular, my Conservative colleagues. Last night I received a Facebook message from one of my constituents, Mr. Roussel, who is a letter carrier in my riding. His message said:

Good evening, Mr. Morin,

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I have been living in Chicoutimi since 2002. I moved to the area to go to university for an interdisciplinary bachelor of arts. In addition, I have been working for Canada Post since 1997, which has allowed me to pay for school, move here with my two children and pay for my house because, as you know, the cultural sector is not the most stable when you want to manage your budget. My salary as a letter carrier fills that shortfall perfectly. Unfortunately, the events of the past weeks, brought about by my employer, Canada Post, leaves me with a bad taste in my mouth. I do not understand. How can a crown corporation use extreme emergency measures to put an end to bargaining that never really got off the ground and impose new measures on us? I know that there is not much you can do to help me, but if you are in the area, I would like to meet with you.

First, I would like to tell Mr. Roussel that I can help him by making his voice heard here in the House of Commons.

What do my Conservative colleagues have to say to this constituent who is a letter carrier in my birthplace, Chicoutimi?

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, that is the same question that my constituents are putting to me. They are asking, "What are you going to do for me? I have stuff that needs to get sent, stuff that needs to be delivered. I have bills that need to be sent out. I have payments that are stuck in the mail".

The response is to put the workers back to work. They have gone through a process. They have had opportunities to come to a negotiated agreement. Obviously, they do not want to for one reason or another. That is why the minister has had to do what she is doing.

I would suggest we get behind the minister, support the back-to-work legislation, support this person going back to work immediately and actually getting his paycheck. He will have his raises. There is a process that can be used to resolve the other outstanding issues. What is wrong with that? It benefits the Canadian economy and it benefits the postal workers and actually resolves this issue.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, overall, there are times when back-to-work legislation is necessary but we have seen two instances in the last week where the government has come out far too quickly. Handcuffing the arbitrator, in terms of what he or she can or cannot render an opinion on, is one of the most egregious aspects of this legislation.

Specifically, why did the government feel it necessary to get into stating the claim on salaries? There was an offer put forward by Canada Post. Who in the government said, "Let's make them take less than what's been offered already. Let's give them a haircut and put it in the legislation and force them to take less money than has been offered them?" Why would the government ever think that would be a good idea?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, there are always difficult decisions that have to be made when one is a parliamentarian. That is the role we accept when we come to Ottawa. We have to look at that role and take it very seriously. However, we always have to be focused on what the end result is going to be.

The end result required here is one that gets the workers back to work, gets the mail flowing, gets the parcels delivered and gets the parts delivered to the farm dealerships. All those services are now being stopped by the mail service. We need to get that service back up and running.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have received comments from a number of businesses, in particular small business. These are companies that would hire two or three people. One in particular has the postal service deliver its media. It is a weekly newspaper in one of the smaller communities and there are four of them in my riding. This individual employs three other people and basically has said that should the mail strike go on this individual will be out of business and these people would lose their jobs.

We heard comments earlier in the day about respect for workers. I know the type of riding that the member comes from. I wonder if this would be an issue in his riding, these small weekly papers, and not only that but the effects on the people they serve and the inconvenience they are going through.

• (1300)

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the intelligent question. It is always appreciated to have colleagues like him working on behalf of his constituents and we know he is here doing that.

It actually is impacting my area, my constituents and the businesses in that area, but not just in my area. There is one farm publication that is published weekly that has 30,000 pieces of paper in the mail being sent somewhere. That farm publication is one of the joining blocks to farmers all across western Canada. It talks about the markets, what is happening in the sector and about the forecast. It has a variety of different information including classified ads of things to sell and buy. All that is lost.

Now they are sitting there waiting to publish their next edition. Should they publish it and send it? Those are serious questions being asked. If they do not publish and send it, do they need those employees? Are they going to be laid off for a time?

Those are questions that they are trying to answer around the board table right now. That is why they need guidance. That is why they need us to do our job here and put these guys back to work.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Prince Albert for reading that second letter. Unfortunately, after listening to what it said, I did not reach the same conclusions.

I worked on a community newspaper in my riding, *Le journal des citoyens*. Canada Post has been distributing this newspaper for 10 years. It was the best distribution service and the best price we could find. The newspaper has been distributed for 10 years but yesterday it was not. The copies came back from the printer and they are sitting on pallets in a warehouse. The paper will not be distributed, like approximately 50 other community newspapers in Quebec that are distributed through Admail. The reason why the newspaper will not get distributed for the first time in 10 years is not because of a strike but because of a lockout.

I would like the hon. member to explain to us the difference between a strike and a lockout. In my opinion, it seems very, very simple.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, the difference between a strike and a lockout is pretty obvious, but I think we have to focus on what our constituents, the people who sent us here, want us to do. They really do not care how it is done. They want to get their mail.

The company the hon. member mentioned is similar to the company in my riding. He just made the argument for me. That company has all that stuff sitting in its offices that it wants to mail, but it cannot. We need to get these people back to work. We have to get both sides back to the bargaining table and finish off this agreement. This needs to happen now.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on the question that was just posed to the member.

Canada Post is a corporation of the Government of Canada, and nothing prevents the hon. member's leader, from being able to ask that Canada Post end the lockout. Canada Post could seek to get affirmation that there would not be any strikes in any form.

Would this not be something to which the government would be open, as opposed to having to bring in this type of legislation, which is precedent setting. This is not typical back-to-work legislation. Many would argue some of the clauses that have been put into this current legislation are anti-constitutional and we will find out in time if that is the case.

Why not look at what it is that Canada Post has actually done in terms of forcing a lockout? Is there not a better way of resolving this issue?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, Canada Post and the union started in October last year to try to negotiate some sort of agreement. If the hon. member could give me some logic in making us think that would actually happen, why would it not have happened in the past? They have had opportunities. We have done everything we can through mediation and consultation, working with both sides. The minister herself was involved in trying to get both sides to the bargaining table.

The reality is, it appears that both sides are so far apart, this is the action we have to take.

● (1305)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been here since this morning, listening to both sides of the debate. It has become very clear to me at this time that some people, particularly on the other side of the House, probably need to take a course on labour relations. What I am hearing right now is that, for our fellow citizens, we should force the employees back to work immediately.

People need to understand the essence of the problem. At present, a crown corporation has decided to impose a lockout based on indirect advice from the Minister of Labour. Whether we are talking about a crown corporation or a private company, the economic power is always on the side of management, which has a business to run. The union, however, represents its members, who are trying to provide for their families. Parliament has adopted the Canada Labour Code, which sets out rules for both sides but which limits the

employers' power in order to ensure greater equality in the balance of power when it comes time to negotiate. These negotiations are absolutely essential since they provide a good balance of power so that a fair agreement can be reached.

That is, for the most part, why Canada has unions in the first place. We know very well that in non-unionized companies, the workers do not even have the minimum protection provided by law. The regulations tend to favour management, especially when it comes to salary.

In the past, the crown corporation and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers enjoyed more or less equal power. We now have a government with a slim majority, for which less than 60% of Canadians and 20% of Quebecers voted. The President and CEO of the crown corporation felt completely at liberty to impose a lockout so that the government could then intervene, once again in favour of management, placing the employees in an absolutely untenable situation.

Let us not forget that collective bargaining is based on good faith. The union was prepared to keep its pressure tactics to a minimum to allow the mail to continue being delivered. It demonstrated flexibility and was even willing to renew its previous collective agreement until the parties could agree on the outstanding issues. Canada Post would not listen, and after the Minister of Labour interfered in the process, bargaining in good faith went out the window yet again and was completely forgotten. The corporation obviously wanted the government to intervene from the start and gave it the means to do so.

What bothers me a great deal about this back-to-work legislation is that it sends a clear message to all the other Canadian corporations, big and small. They are essentially being told that they just have to arrange for a lockout, create an impasse and the government will come to the rescue by giving them the tools to reduce the power of the unions and crush the workers. It is a bad message for all Canadians, especially those the people across the way represent and we represent.

Let us be clear. If we allow this power to be transferred to the employer, not only for Canada Post, but for all corporations, then we are minimizing the power of the workers. This could lead to reduced salaries for unionized workers and workers in other economic sectors. We will end up in an even worse situation than we are in now, where real salaries have not really changed at all since the free trade agreement was signed with the United States in 1988.

● (1310)

At present, Canadian workers earn, on average, about the same amount. Their purchasing power has not increased, even though the gross national product—what Canada produces and posts as profit—has increased considerably since that time. Once again, this bill sends a message that the workers will have to be satisfied with crumbs while the power of management will continue to increase, without regard for negotiating in good faith.

Government Orders

This bill shows a lack of respect, especially for the negotiation process, Canada Post workers and all Canadian workers, whether or not they are unionized.

The members opposite claim that it is for the sake of the economy and that we must not endanger the current economic recovery. This economy does not consist solely of business and private enterprise. It cannot be measured by profits alone. It must also be measured by purchasing power. Canada Post workers are consumers, and any reduction in their purchasing power, whether in the public, parapublic or private sector, has repercussions in the other sectors. In the end, contrary to what the members opposite would like us to believe, this bill will not help the economy, but will instead hurt the rest of the economy.

In my opinion, this bill is fundamentally unfair. If the government wanted to take advantage of the power that comes with a majority of the seats, it could have done so in a way that was much less unfair to Canada Post employees.

This bill has to do with forcing workers back to work and with arbitration. This means that a single person chosen by the government will decide on the offer that best meets the needs of Canada Post. We can already guess which offer will be chosen. But this bill also imposes an income scale that was not negotiated and, as mentioned by some of my colleagues, is lower than the employer's final offer.

I remember that the latest offer made by the employer was an increase of 1.9% in 2011, 2012 and 2013, and 2% in 2014. I also remember that the inflation rate is currently 3.3%. That is much lower than the increase in the cost of living, and this final offer will result in decreased purchasing power for the workers. Not only did the government decide that this was unsatisfactory, but it also included an income scale in the bill that is even lower than that in the final offer. The bill offers 1.75% for 2011, 1.5% for 2012 and 2% for 2013 and 2014.

I heard the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain say that this bill was fair and reasonable for the two parties. Once again, if the government wanted to impose a bill using the majority it was granted by a minority of Canadians, if it truly wanted to propose a fairer bill, if it wanted to force a return to work that would benefit both parties, it could have chosen other options.

As I mentioned, the union at Canada Post was prepared to agree to renew the collective agreement. That could have been included in this bill. The government could have chosen to put an end to the lockout without affecting the right to strike. Before the lockout, people were still receiving their mail. The union used part of its right to strike to put some pressure and force Canada Post to return to the bargaining table.

The bill could have put an end to the lockout and ensured that all Canadians would receive their mail again, without affecting Canada Post employees' right to strike. That was not done.

As I mentioned, the government could have chosen not to interfere with salaries. The government chose not to do that.

• (1315)

The government also could have eliminated the orphan clauses. These clauses mean that a new hire at Canada Post would earn up to 18% less for doing the same job as a unionized employee who has been there for a certain number of years. Orphan clauses have been criticized in Quebec and in Canada for being fundamentally unfair and for violating basic rights. But the government decided not to prevent Canada Post from going in that direction. The bill could have done so, but it does not.

The bill also could have resolved the issue of pensions. There are some very profound differences on the pension bargaining table. Canada Post wants to put an end to the current plan, but still make it available. This would mean a defined benefit pension plan for existing employees and a defined contribution pension plan for new employees. Once again, that is something fundamentally unfair and dangerous for workers. The difference should be clear. Defined benefits provide economic security and provide an adequate income during retirement. Retirees are then able to spend this money and keep the economy going.

What the government is saying to new, younger workers at Canada Post is that the previous generation had it easier. It was not so easy, because that generation had to fight for those rights. The previous generation would have all of these benefits, but the new workers would be forced to subscribe to a defined contribution pension plan. At the end of the day, all of the financial risk would fall on them. They would have to pray that, when they retire at the age of 60 or 65, it is not in the middle of a recession so that they are not forced to work until they are 65 or 70 in order to receive their full pension, which would be lower because of the economic crisis. That is the difference.

With a defined benefit pension plan, the employee knows how much they will receive upon retirement, based on the number of years of service and the salary earned. The defined contribution system puts all the risk on the new employees' shoulders. These employees are dependent on the ups and downs of the financial market and they will have to pray that there is not a crisis when the time comes for them to retire.

The government is proposing a bill that sides with the employer. It could have proposed something better. It could have encouraged the two parties to settle this. The postal union was ready to renew the previous collective agreement. The union showed a willingness to bargain in good faith, accepting that technological adjustments will be needed to help Canada Post face the future. The union was clear on the fact that it would be necessary to restructure Canada Post, just not in the one-sided manner that has been proposed.

It is often said that there is less mail. My colleague from British Columbia said that there is slightly less mail than before but that the difference is not that significant. According to the numbers, mail volume has dropped by 7% since the economic crisis began—mostly because of the economic crisis—compared with about 11% for hours worked. That means that our workers have been more efficient in terms of productivity. That brings me to another point that was brought up by the government and the third opposition party and its leader. They seem to be saying that we are against profits.

Government Orders

Canada Post made \$281 million in profits and paid out up to \$2 billion in dividends to the Canadian government. That is good because it benefits the overall public and Canada Post, which can use those profits to reinvest, restructure, move ahead and renew itself. But do not forget that some of those profits do not come just from selling stamps.

• (1320)

It comes from better investments. It also comes from the fact that the employees are more productive. The productivity of the Canada Post employees should be reflected in a compensation system that translates into higher incomes and salaries. That is not what we are currently seeing. We get the impression that these people think we are against making a profit. That is not true. We want Canada Post to continue being profitable, but we also want the employees who are making Canada Post profitable to be able to benefit from those profits, to be able to share in the benefits of a good organization and greater productivity.

That is not what is being proposed in this bill, which imposes a salary scale that is lower than what the rate of inflation might be. We will have a bit of time left to debate these issues later.

I would like our friends in the government to take a bit of time to try to explain to me why they feel this bill is so important at this stage, when the bargaining could have continued and the union could have kept up its rotating strike, which had a limited impact. The hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain was talking about his constituents who had been deeply affected by this. I think that Estevan and Weyburn in his riding had not gone through a rotating strike yet. There had been no impact on his riding yet.

I would like to know why this was the only avenue they had to offer. Why not simply remove Canada Post's right to resort to a lockout, and allow the union to continue doing what it was doing? Why was it necessary to offer wage increases that are lower than the ones that were offered by the employer? I need to know. I need to understand why. No one has explained it to me yet.

I would like to know why the government has given itself the power to force employees back to work under this law? Why did it not use this as an opportunity to stop Canada Post from imposing two different pay scales, one for existing employees and another for new employees, regardless of the work they do? New employees' salaries are going to be reduced by 20%. Why could a provision not be included in a bill that is supposed to be fair and balanced? Why could the government not prevent the crown corporation, Canada Post, from forcing employees to sacrifice a long-standing right, for which they fought hard and into which they have been paying for quite some time? Why could the old system not continue? The union itself proposed leaving things as they were and using a separate mediation process to address the employer's questions and concerns and making the necessary adjustments.

Why is the crown corporation not prohibited from forcing employees to contribute to a defined contribution plan rather than a defined benefit plan?

These are all questions that I would have liked to hear addressed this morning, but the only thing I am hearing, and pardon me for saying so, are the same platitudes and the same old rhetoric about the

economy. Yes, the economy is important to Canadians, but we also need to think about the contributions made by the workers, most of them unionized, and the non-unionized workers who will be affected by these salary reductions. This will also push down wages, which will have a negative impact on the economy.

I would like to have some answers to these very important questions by the end of our debate. Until we get some answers to these questions, I think the NDP's position is clear.

[English]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's comments. I am sure he has heard, as many of us in this chamber have, from many constituents over these past number of weeks about their concerns regarding the Canada Post situation.

I want to read excerpts from some of the ones that I have received.

This first one points out to me, right in the first sentence, that he did not vote Conservative, he voted NDP. However, he goes on to say, "This greediness for money and job security has to stop. No agency or organization in this day and age has job security and better pensions, while many organizations are cutting back on their pensions and laying off staff because they cannot make ends meet".

Another constituent writes, "I am contacting you as a small business owner who is going to be greatly affected by the postal strike. We distribute across North America and when the strike is countrywide, our shipping costs will increase by more than half. Depending on how long this strike goes on, it would cripple us".

One final one states, "The current postal strike has ended my livelihood. I run a small mail order business. This strike must be doing much damage to our economy. I urge you to put pressure on the government in caucus meetings, et cetera, to bring this strike to a close".

The member says we should continue negotiations. How long are we willing to just let this situation slide before we take action to preserve jobs and to preserve businesses in this country?

• (1325)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

In fact, I think this is a key issue because this argument comes up often. I have a lot of respect for the argument brought up by your constituent. However, I think that it misses the point.

A divergence of views does exist between the two parties. I believe that this divergence stems from the fact that Canada Post clearly did not bargain in good faith. Canada Post knew in advance that the government would be able to impose this lockout. Knowing that the government would support it, the crown corporation had no reason to bargain in good faith.

As for the question raised by my colleague's constituent, I think that the answer is very simple. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers was prepared to renew the current collective agreement. It was not a question of asking for more, but at least keeping what it already has. That is not what Canada Post is offering.

Canada Post is asking them to give up long-standing rights, on the spot. That is what should be at the heart of our current debates and concerns. Canada Post is making profits right now, and we hope that it continues to do so. That way, it can continue to invest and reward its employees.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. Before we carry on with questions and comments, it is a good idea for members to keep in mind that there are often many questions for the previous speaker, so it is a good idea to keep questions and responses to around a minute or so.

The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think my question coattails on the question posed by the member for Kitchener—Conestoga. I had put a question earlier to the member for Hamilton Mountain, but I did not really get an answer, so I will ask this NDP member if he might enlighten me.

We agree that this piece of legislation is very concerning. We also agree that we would want to see both parties come together in a negotiated settlement. We believe in due process and bargaining. However, at the end of the day, somewhere down the road, there comes a time when the public has to be served and we have to bring the situation to an end.

Would the NDP at any time support back-to-work legislation and what would the conditions have to be in order to support that legislation?

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I am not here to answer hypothetical questions. We have a bill that the government is trying to ram down our throats. That is what we are currently discussing and what must be discussed. We could have talked about a bill introduced in the fall. The government could have taken more time, but that is not what it has chosen to do.

The main question is this: why would we let the government allow Canada Post to fail to negotiate in good faith? That is the question that I would like the members of the third party to answer. I have not had an answer to that question. All I have is a hypothetical question about an issue that, for the time being, is very urgent because the government is talking about shortening the debate process.

[English]

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague for his intervention and particularly for the patience he showed with members to run through a bit of the labour relations process and explain how important the balance is between the employer and the union. Please rest assured that I do not think it is a fair balance, but it has been accepted and recognized in statute.

Members of the government caucus have cited that they had to step in to ensure that the public was not unduly affected. Would the member agree with me that the government, by stepping in this way and signalling to the parties that it was prepared to do this, has created an imbalance that will inevitably have an impact on the public?

• (1330)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for his quite pertinent question.

I completely agree with his suggestion. In negotiations between two parties, there must be good faith for the parties to come to an agreement. When one party already knows that, in the short or medium term, the government will support its side by putting forward legislation that will force the other side to accept even less than what it was looking for, I believe it is obvious that negotiating in good faith is impossible. At that point, this undermines the recourse of all workers in the economy and in other sectors.

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have heard members opposite speak to the rights and entitlements of public sector union members. What I have not heard from the opposition is any concern for the seniors in my riding who are waiting on some medical laboratory tests being sent in the mail, nor have I heard any concerns for the small businesses that depend on Canada Post to help put food on the table for its employees.

Why does the opposition feel that the rights and entitlements of union workers should come at the expense of all Canadians, and harm our economy and our seniors who depend on medical tests getting delivered through the mail?

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. I do not know whether he really heard what I said today.

I already mentioned that the union itself was prepared to deliver emergency services. Throughout the bargaining process, the union has shown itself to be tremendously flexible, unlike management. Had there not been a lockout, the member's fellow Canadians would have had access to their checks, their drugs, and everything else they needed.

The problem is not the right to strike, and the rotating strikes—which made it possible for folks to continue to access the services they needed—but management, which imposed a lockout, and knew full well that the government would force a return to work on their terms.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord has time to ask a brief question.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques to clarify the issue of “orphan clauses”, and explain how this issue is central to the current dispute.

Government Orders

If the Conservatives really wanted to avoid the need for special legislation, they could have dealt much earlier with the general issue of “orphan clauses”, and had them banned on the basis that they are both discriminatory and, ultimately, unconstitutional.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, the issue of orphan clauses is surfacing more and more in the context of negotiations and labour relations. Obviously, employers want payroll expenses to decrease. That is difficult to achieve with the existing rights of current employees. Therefore, they are trying to start an intergenerational conflict between current employees and young people. The message being sent to young people who will be hired by Canada Post is that their work will be the same as that of a current employee, but that it is worth 18% less.

What message are we sending to the new generation? What message are we giving them? We are telling them that their work is worth less than the work of current employees. I believe it is a totally diabolical tool because it will kindle intergenerational conflicts that we try to avoid in a society that we want to be just and fair in the future.

• (1335)

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is introducing in the House Bill C-6, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services. This bill will provide as well for an impartial arbitration process to finalize the terms of a new collective agreement.

Our government agrees that employers have a right to freely negotiate collective agreements. I am sure that all members of Parliament are of the same mind on this fundamental principle of labour relations in Canada. The current federal system governing labour relations puts the emphasis on mediation and conciliation and is generally effective at resolving the disputed issues in labour agreements.

In these negotiations, though, we have done everything possible to resolve the outstanding issues but our efforts have been in vain. The parties still have not managed to find a basis of agreement, and under the circumstances, we must consider the repercussions of a work stoppage in a broader context.

No one is happy to see people forced back to work, but we are living in unusual times that require us to take action. We must act quickly to avoid a lengthy interruption of postal service, which is an essential cog in the Canadian economy at a time when the economic recovery is still fragile.

Before speaking about the economic repercussions of this work stoppage and our responsibility to act—as several of my colleagues have done today—I would like to share some basic information about the dispute and explain how the process has led to the situation in which we find ourselves.

The negotiations between Canada Post and the members of the Urban Postal Operation unit of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers started in October 2010. The collective agreement governing nearly 50,000 postal workers expired on January 31, 2011. After more than eight months, the parties have failed to reach an agreement despite the efforts at negotiation, conciliation and mediation.

On May 30, the union gave the employer strike notice effective June 3. On that date, the Canada Post employees began their pressure tactics by launching rotating strikes. The Minister of Labour has played a proactive role from the beginning. On several occasions, she tried to bring the parties together in order to restart the negotiations. Despite all her efforts, the employer and the union have not managed to reach an agreement. On June 15, management declared a lockout, thereby putting an end to the rotating strikes. Since then, postal service has been paralyzed.

We therefore find ourselves in the very unfortunate situation of a work stoppage in which the employer and the union have not managed to reach an agreement, and their positions remain very far apart. This is not only unfortunate but very concerning. Canadians from coast to coast are quite anxious about the consequences for the economy and the effects on them. They feel caught between management and the employees. All Canadians are affected and penalized by this labour dispute, whether in regard to their companies or families or to seniors all across the country, including in Lévis—Bellechasse et les Etchemins, or whether living in urban or rural areas, because Canada Post plays a key role in our society.

We all remember the 1997 labour stoppage at Canada Post lasting two weeks. At the time, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimated that the stoppage had cost small and medium-sized businesses \$200 million a day.

• (1340)

Even though the postal service has lost ground since 1997 to technologies like email, fax as well as electronic billing and banking, small and medium-sized businesses still rely heavily on the postal service for billing and processing orders. By May 18, when the federation released an open letter to the management of Canada Post, the federation and its 108,000 small and medium-sized businesses were already sounding the alarm.

They said, over a month ago, that they were concerned about continually rising costs at Canada Post and their impact on SMEs, which they say will push even more businesses to look for alternatives for their mail and will have a negative impact on Canada Post.

They went on to add that “for other small businesses, a lengthy mail interruption may negatively impact their firms”. Consider magazines, newspapers and other periodicals, for example. A majority of their circulation depends on the postal service provided by Canada Post. During a postal interruption there are no other practical and viable ways to distribute those publications.

This means that the periodicals industry will be hard hit if this postal interruption lasts any longer. And this is not the only example. A prolonged work stoppage would have negative repercussions for many other industries and segments of the public, whether it be our families, our seniors or our veterans. Some businesses are on high alert and are calling on the government to live up to its responsibilities.

Receiving cheques and accounts payable and delivering customer invoices, as well as sending and receiving important documents, are all disrupted by this dispute. Canada is barely starting to show signs of recovery after the economic crisis that hit the entire world hard. We are in a good position, thanks to the stability of our banking system and the extremely positive impact of our government's economic action plan, and our economy is indeed continuing to grow more rapidly than the economies of the other industrialized countries.

In fact, we have had 2.9% growth this year, and growth is estimated to be 2.6% next year. But it is still fragile. We are facing a number of challenges, including major budget cuts, not to mention that the global economic recovery is moving slowly and there continue to be risks in the markets.

Canada is not on an island, and is not immune to the fluctuations and crises taking place in other parts of the world. We cannot allow ourselves to rest on our laurels. At this stage, we have to do everything we can to stimulate economic growth and job creation. That is what we have undertaken in the Speech from the Throne. We have said very clearly that our government "will continue to focus on jobs and growth".

A lengthy interruption of postal services could counteract all the efforts made, not only by our government but also by our businesses, our associations, our community organizations and all Canadians, to promote the recovery and strengthen the foundations of our economy.

The figures speak volumes: it is estimated that each week Canada Post employees are on strike represents losses of \$9 to \$31 million for the Canadian economy. Each additional day of lockout causes significant commercial and financial losses for Canada.

The parties have had ample time to reach an agreement: over eight months. It would be irresponsible for us to allow matters to take their course at the risk of the situation becoming poisoned and this work stoppage going on for a long time.

● (1345)

The Canada Labour Code applies to federally regulated employees in key economic sectors. Part I of the Code deals with the rights and responsibilities of employers, unions and the Minister of Labour in the collective bargaining process, specifically when parties are unable to resolve their differences.

Ideally, the parties will be able to prevent and resolve issues in dispute by themselves. However, a deadlock may arise during the bargaining process and result in a labour dispute with implications that are extremely damaging to the national economy. When this kind of situation arises, Parliament has a duty to act, as it has in the past when similar situations have occurred.

In the past 60 years, our Parliament has used this instrument 32 times. Under the legislation we are proposing, a four-year collective agreement may be put in place. This new collective agreement would include wage increases phased in over the four-year period. In addition to ensuring the immediate resumption and continuation of postal services, the bill we introduced yesterday would make arbitration the method for resolving issues that remain bones of contention between the parties.

Government Orders

The onus will be on the arbitrator to choose between the final proposals made by union and management. It should be noted however that this legislation in no way prevents the parties from continuing the bargaining process and reaching an agreement, which is what occurred in 1997. Our government lives up to its responsibilities and is pressing both management and labour to reach an agreement.

The bill specifically provides that parties may agree to enter into new collective agreements at any time. It is our fervent hope that the parties continue to negotiate to resolve this conflict before the arbitrator has to step in and make a determination.

Lastly, the act would come into force 24 hours after royal assent, thereby giving workers an opportunity to fully acquaint themselves with the requirements and implications of the legislation. This is an exceptional measure that has come at a time when economic recovery is still fragile. I can assure the House that this decision was not made lightly, as I have made clear. We are aware, however, that there is no benefit to delaying the process and that Canadians expect our government to live up to its responsibilities. We are determined to take the necessary steps to protect the interests of Canadians and of our economy.

In closing, in order to safeguard our economic recovery and the well-being of Canadians, I would encourage all members of the House to support our government's actions to put an end to this dispute, thereby ensuring the resumption of regular mail services throughout the country.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to what my colleague from Quebec had to say. I myself practised labour law for more than 20 years, acting on behalf of both employers and unions.

We are luckier in Quebec than people in the rest of Canada because we have laws that clearly protect the right to negotiate and the power relationship between the parties. As everyone knows, what counts in negotiations is this famous power relationship.

What I find very tiring and what will help me feel very comfortable in voting against this bill forcing a return to work is the fact that they are completely changing the power relationship and infusing everything with this argument about the economic recovery. What I find very tiring is that they are not giving the parties a chance to arrive at a real negotiated agreement. I want to review the timeline of these events. Just last June 2—not two or three years ago—there were some rotating strikes, but most Canadians in contact with me did not even know because the union was careful to deliver the mail. On June 14, Canada Post claimed it had suffered financial losses of \$70 million since June 3.

In reply, though, to a question from journalists, the labour minister said that return to work legislation was unnecessary for Canada Post because these were rotating strikes. On the evening of June 14, Canada Post declared a national lockout, and the morning of June 15, the minister said she had received very few complaints about the rotating strikes at Canada Post. Is there someone on the other side of the House who can tell me what changed so much over the space of three hours?

Government Orders

• (1350)

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Gatineau for her question.

I would like to remind her, as I said in my speech, that this dispute has been bogged down for more than eight months and our Minister of Labour has made every effort since January to get conciliation and mediation processes going. Even so, we find ourselves in a situation where Canada is paralyzed by a postal strike.

I would like to quote an email I received from a businessman late this morning. He too spoke about the rights and responsibilities we have as parliamentarians toward the people we represent. This is what he said:

What are you doing about the rights of small and medium-sized businesses that are waiting for payments mailed to them by customers? Who will pay the charge for exceeding my credit line? Who will protect the rights of my 32 employees who are facing financial danger because we have not received our payments from customers and the bank might cancel our credit facility?

We also have a responsibility as parliamentarians to protect the rights and responsibilities of people who are waiting for postal service to resume.

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs for the good work he does for Canadian veterans.

This debate is really about our constituents. I received a letter from one of my constituents named Anne, who stated:

This whole situation has been an nightmare for our Chilliwack family. My husband delivers parcels for a group who are subcontracted to Canada Post, and since the lock out, he too has been locked out and had no work....We have two Elementary school age children, and find it hard to make ends meet as it is. So far my husband has already lost a week's worth of wages, which we depend on...

This is just one family in my riding that has already lost a week of wages because of this dispute. Could the minister explain the urgency of acting quickly to ensure this is not repeated across the country?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon for his question and also congratulate him on his election to this House. I hope that he has a brilliant career, just like his father.

The hon. member is completely right. Across Canada, whether back home in Bellechasse and Les Etchemins, in Lévis, or British Columbia, folks expect this House to live up to its responsibilities. It is clear that the bargaining process is getting bogged down. Several million dollars are lost every week. What is most damaging right now is that people are leaving Canada Post behind. We want a strong postal service in Canada, and yet with every day, the long-term interests of Canada Post are being jeopardized. We want to give Canada Post—its workers and its management—an opportunity to resume service. That is why we need this bill.

[English]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to know if the member will at least take note of or recognize that the root cause of the labour dispute, the impasse we are debating today,

finds its origins in the fact that successive federal governments have used Canada Post as a cash cow and have demanded dividends from it in terms of hundreds of millions of dollars of dividends that go into general revenue.

There would be no shortfall in the pension plan of the workers of Canada Post if the Government of Canada was not harvesting revenue. The mandate of Canada Post is supposed to be to deliver mail to a maximum number of Canadians for the least amount of money, not to generate revenue for the government.

The government, in imposing this back to work legislation, is adding insult to injury in that it is the root cause for the impasse because it is gouging Canada Post of all this revenue and milking it like a cash cow instead of putting it into delivering mail.

• (1355)

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that the role of this House is not to play negotiator, to take sides, or to get behind management or labour. The role of this House is to meet its responsibilities in a dispute that has been bogged down for over eight months and is preventing people from having access to a quality postal service.

What I can tell the hon. member is that salary increases are provided for in this document. It is crucial that an arbitrator be appointed, who will opt wisely for the most beneficial proposal. That will be his role. Our role is to live up to our responsibilities and put an end to this labour dispute under the leadership of our Minister of Labour.

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is my 11th year here and that is one of the funniest things I have heard during my time here; that the government did not take sides in this legislation. I did not hear the knock-knock before, but that was a funny thing.

It is egregious that the government set out parameters around the salaries. That was wrong in this case. It is very rare to see this in legislation. How did the government arrive at salaries that were lower than what was on the table for the workers in the first place? Canada Post made an offer, but the government felt obliged to offer the workers less in the legislation. What drove the government to make that decision?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

An arbitrator will decide between the proposals submitted to him: one by management, the other by labour. The arbitrator will then make a well-informed decision.

I remind members that we found ourselves in a similar situation in 1997. A bill was passed at the time, which brought pressure to bear and ensured that a negotiated solution was reached. We strongly hope that the parties are able to reach an agreement and that a negotiated solution can be found. But one thing is certain, we will not allow Canada's economy to be paralyzed by a dispute between management and labour.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we continue, I will let the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour know that I will be interrupting his initial speech at around 2 p.m. for statements by members.

The hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that in the interventions by members opposite, we have had examples provided to the House of their constituents and of small businesses harmed by the decision of Canada Post to lock out its employees. By bringing this legislation to the floor, what the Conservatives have done is bring the hammer down on the employees. I do not understand the logic to that.

Why did the Conservatives not bring legislation in to end the lock-out, perhaps, or to fire every one of the senior executives of Canada Post for having imposed that kind of hardship on the citizens of our country? If they have such evidence of the harm that Canada Post has done to the citizens and small businesses of our country, why have they come down on the backs of the people who actually do the work for Canada Post?

The Speaker: The hon. member will have 19 minutes left to conclude his speech after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

STUDENTS IN THE RIDING OF LOTBINIÈRE—CHUTES-DE-LA-CHAUDIÈRE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Sunday evening, I had the privilege and honour to be with some young graduates from Charny and their families.

Again this year, active and dynamic students in Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière are reaping the rewards of their efforts as they receive their Secondary 5 diploma.

They are undoubtedly destined for success, since our region will be needing many more people in the labour force in the years to come. For some of them, their diploma will give them access to the labour market; for others, it will lead them to vocational or college programs. Each of them is a proud member of the next generation in a field that will excite them and will lead them to actively participate in our society.

I wish all of the graduates in Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière success and I encourage you to follow your dreams!

* * *

● (1400)

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, when I attended the NDP convention in Vancouver, I travelled on the SkyTrain, an efficient and non-polluting method of transportation that is the envy of many Montrealers, who are still waiting for a shuttle like that to connect the airport with downtown. Montrealers deserve to also have this kind of public transit

Statements by Members

incorporated into infrastructure projects like the bridges spanning the St. Lawrence River.

At present, the partial closing of the Mercier Bridge has literally imprisoned residents of my riding of LaSalle—Émard.

I hope that this government will demonstrate leadership when it comes to infrastructure projects and that, in cooperation with the government of Quebec, we will be able to provide alternatives worthy of the 21st century.

As science and technology critic for the official opposition, I will consider it my duty to ensure that we achieve these objectives.

* * *

[English]

HOCKEY TEAM

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today it gives me great pleasure to congratulate the Ontario Hockey League champion Owen Sound Attack on its spectacular season. Our boys finished the regular season with a franchise record of 47 wins.

The Attack players had an outstanding playoff season. First they manhandled the London Knights, trampled the Plymouth Whalers and outclassed the 2010 Memorial Cup champion Windsor Spitfires. Then they defeated the Mississauga St. Michael's Majors in a dramatic come-from-behind overtime win in game seven. This earned them the title of OHL champions and secured them a spot at the Memorial Cup.

To top off a successful season, coach Mark Reeds was named the OHL coach of the year and Dale DeGray was named the OHL executive of the year. Congratulations to both of them.

The Attack have by far the best fan support in the OHL. I have been a fan and a proud supporter of the Owen Sound Attack from the beginning. I can hardly wait for next season to start. Go Attack go.

* * *

UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to acknowledge the University of Prince Edward Island's outgoing president, Wade MacLauchlan.

Mr. MacLauchlan has been president of UPEI for 12 years and in that time frame he has transformed the university and in so doing enriched our community.

More than \$70 million has been donated to the university since Mr. MacLauchlan took office in 1999, a tremendous sum for a smaller university.

His other achievements include seeing UPEI rated tops among all universities in Canada for growth in research, realizing a 40% increase in student enrolment, and securing substantial new investment into buildings and programs.

Wade will be ending his term next month, a poignant moment for both the UPEI community and for him. A proud native islander, Wade has effected very real, permanent and positive change to Prince Edward Island.

Statements by Members

On behalf of the constituents in my riding of Charlottetown, I am proud and grateful to recognize and thank Mr. Wade MacLauchlan for his hard work, dedication and love for Prince Edward Island and its university.

STEPHEN LEACOCK MEMORIAL MEDAL

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, June 11, the 2011 Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour was presented at a gala reception at the YMCA Geneva Park Conference Centre near the city of Orillia in my riding.

Each year the Leacock Medal is awarded for the most humorous book published in Canada the previous year. Its winners have included literary icons like Farley Mowat and W.O. Mitchell and contemporary humorists like Terry Fallis and Will Ferguson.

This year, the Leacock Associates have awarded the medal and its \$15,000 prize, courtesy of TD Bank Financial Group, to Trevor Cole of Hamilton, Ontario for his recent book, *Practical Jean*.

I invite members to join in congratulating Mr. Cole for this great achievement. He brings us a work that recalls Leacock's own words on the subject, "Humour is essentially a comforter, reconciling us to things as they are in contrast to things as they might be".

I congratulate Trevor.

● (1405)

[Translation]

WORLD CHORAL FESTIVAL

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on this first occasion I have had to rise in the House, I want to thank the voters in the riding of Alfred-Pellan for placing their trust in me. Thank you to all the volunteers, citizens, friends and family members who put their shoulders to the wheel during the election campaign.

Quebeckers spoke and they chose the NDP to represent them in Parliament. I will work tirelessly to represent their interests and the interests of all Canadians.

Since June 17, all of Laval Island has been moving to the beat of the music of the World Choral Festival. Created by Gregory Charles, this internationally known festival is now in its seventh season.

The vocal ensemble À ContreVoix can be heard next Saturday in the chapel of the Soeurs missionnaires de l'Immaculée-conception in Vimont, and it will be quite a show.

Best of luck to the 2011 edition of the World Choral Festival!

[English]

HUNTING, TRAPPING AND FISHING

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to advise all members of my intention to introduce a private member's bill that would establish a national hunting, trapping and fishing heritage day.

Many of my hon. colleagues will recall that in the past I have attempted to pass such a bill twice. Mostly recently, in the 40th Parliament, Bill C-465, An Act respecting a National Hunting, Trapping and Fishing Heritage Day, died on the order paper in the Senate after being passed by this House and referred to the appropriate Senate committee.

Hunting, trapping and fishing are some of the oldest practices in Canadian society, from the first nations to the *coureur des bois*, and the Inuit peoples of our north, hunting, trapping and fishing have played a vital role in the sustainability of past and present communities.

This bill would give Canadians a day to honour those who have contributed so greatly to our society, history and economy.

I would encourage all of my hon. colleagues to support my bill when it is introduced here for a third time.

INTERNATIONAL INDIAN FILM ACADEMY AWARDS

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the International Indian Film Academy Awards come to Canada this week. The IIFA awards will showcase Indian culture and cinema, with Bollywood stars.

Being held for the first time in North America, the show is expected to be seen by a billion people worldwide.

Canada is the home to a vibrant, over one million strong Indo-Canadian community that plays a vital role in economic and cultural landscape. Under our government, Canada and India enjoy excellent bilateral creative relations and are further strengthening ties across a wide range of sectors, including education, energy, science and technology, culture, agriculture and the environment.

The IIFA awards are an excellent opportunity to reflect on the tremendous contributions that the Indian diaspora have made to our country's rich and diverse heritage.

I ask all members to please join with me in extending best wishes to IIFA for a successful and entertaining event.

[Translation]

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the people of Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord for placing their trust in me on May 2. I promise them that I will do my very best and that I will fight the undemocratic practices of previous governments and those of the current government in particular.

The dukes and duchesses of the Conservative carnival are so good at reading the lines that are dictated to them from on high that they forget that they are responsible for representing their constituents, a mistake that I will not make. It is time to give power back to the people and repair the image of our elected officials in Ottawa.

On this National Aboriginal Day, let us resolve to represent all the people. The current government and its predecessors seem to purposely forget that the greatest poverty in the world can be found on our native reserves.

I extend my hand to the government and urge it to work with and listen to the members who received another clear mandate on May 2, the mandate for change and non-partisan politics.

* * *

[English]

STANLEY CUP

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a young man from South Shore—St. Margaret's, a hockey hero, and a Stanley Cup winner, Brad Marchand.

I had intended to get on the record earlier but, frankly, all my colleagues from British Columbia had used up all the oxygen in this place bragging up Vancouver.

I do recognize a great effort by the second place team in the league but in Nova Scotia and, in particular, in South Shore—St. Margaret's, the Boston Bruins are number one.

Brad Marchand's career includes two gold medals for Team Canada at the World Junior Championships and now, at 23, he has a Stanley Cup ring.

I congratulate Brad and his family.

The only this could have been any better is if Glen Murray, another Boston Bruins player from South Shore—St. Margaret's, had not retired. Then, we would have had the Stanley Cup visiting in two communities in South Shore—St. Margaret's, not just one.

* * *

• (1410)

[Translation]

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank my constituents, the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent, who have entrusted me with the mandate to represent them in the House of Commons.

Today, June 21, is National Aboriginal Day, a day to celebrate the cultures, heritage and important contributions of first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples to Canadian society. I would like to say a special hello to the Innu, Atikamek and Naskapi people who live in my riding and, of course, to the Wendat people, since the riding of Louis-Saint-Laurent is home to the only Wendat community in Canada.

I would also like to take this opportunity to invite everyone to come to the beautiful, natural amphitheatre in Wendake, where a production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, directed by Robert Lepage and portraying relationships between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people, will run from July 1 to 30.

[English]

Statements by Members

YELENA BONNER

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in tribute to a woman of outstanding dignity and courage. Yelena Bonner was one of the leading advocates for human rights in cold war era U.S.S.R..

Risking her own well-being to further the human rights cause, she fought fiercely for the fundamental freedoms and rights that so many people around the world still demand.

Ms. Bonner was married to Nobel Peace Prize winner Andrei Zakharov. When he was sent into exile for his activism, it was Ms. Bonner who made sure his writings were published.

Arrested and exiled herself in the mid-1980s, she later made it to the United States where she passed away this past weekend after a long illness. She was 88 years old.

Ms. Bonner was an outspoken critic of the Stalinist system and the regimes of Communist Russia. She worked tirelessly for reform and, until the end, advocated changes in Russia that would put people first.

I would like to convey on behalf of all hon. members and all Canadian our condolences to Ms. Bonner's children and our sincere expression of continuing respect for her work.

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NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I join with my colleagues in celebrating National Aboriginal Day.

As we honour and celebrate the contributions of aboriginal peoples from coast to coast to coast, we must also remember that much work remains to be done in order to achieve a more prosperous, healthy and sustainable future for first nations, Inuit and Métis communities across the country.

[Translation]

We must commit not only in word, but also in deed by actively co-operating with the first nations to promote their success.

[English]

The universal provision of adequate housing, safe drinking water and educational opportunities for first nations, Inuit and Métis, this is the standard that the Government of Canada must be measured against.

National Aboriginal Day is an occasion to celebrate and to reaffirm our commitment to equality and to closing the gap in health status, the true measurement of success.

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CANADA DAY

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to take note of the work that goes on every day in Canadian embassies and consulates around the world to promote Canada and our international interests.

Oral Questions

Canada Day is a perfect opportunity to remind our many international partners and friends of the contribution that Canada makes to global security as well as global trade and the great example we provide as a stable and growing economy.

In cities across the world, our representatives will be working to raise awareness of Canada and all it offers as we celebrate our 144th birthday.

In New York city, for example, on June 30 and July 1, the Empire State Building will shine in red and white, reminding our neighbour that Canada is a reliable and strong partner in trade, security and energy. Lighting the Empire State Building is one of the many ways that our representatives are raising awareness of Canada's valuable presence in the world.

For all of us at home and for all our representatives from New Delhi to Moscow, from Beijing to Washington, Canada Day celebrations will be an opportunity to reflect on how blessed we are and highlight to the world this great country, Canada.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on this National Aboriginal Day, I am pleased to draw attention to the inclusive measures that the New Democratic Party introduced last weekend in order to ensure that the aboriginal point of view is truly taken into account.

I understand how apprehensive many aboriginals are at the idea of joining the ranks of a political organization, since this is a concept that is foreign to my home community's way of life and reality.

However, I am pleased to note that the NDP is devoting a significant amount of time and effort to bridging the cultural gap and sharing a vision of Canada that reflects its cultural heritage. I have rarely had the opportunity to see aboriginal leaders from communities across the country set aside differences and join forces in pursuit of a common goal.

In the future, I will work to ensure that inclusive measures leading to this cultural unity become the norm, in order to meet the progressive expectations expressed by the Canadian people.

Mamú Atusetau

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● (1415)

[English]

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is National Aboriginal Day, a day we honour aboriginal cultures and encourage all Canadians to participate in the many festivities planned across the country.

National Aboriginal Day is a celebration dedicated to embracing the rich and diverse cultures, contributions and histories of aboriginal peoples in Canada. It is also an occasion for first nations,

Inuit and Métis to express their deep pride in their heritage and accomplishments.

As we continue to build partnerships for the future, we acknowledge the communities that uphold strong traditions and carry histories filled with great achievements.

We must honour the proud past of aboriginal people and work together to build a confident future.

Events for National Aboriginal Day are scheduled in communities across Canada. For example, today I had the honour of placing a wreath at the National Aboriginal Veterans Monument.

I ask all Canadians and members of the House to participate and share in the celebration of National Aboriginal Day.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the employees of Canada Post used legitimate pressure tactics to defend their rights while continuing to deliver the mail. The response from Canada Post, which is owned by the government, was to lock the doors and suspend mail delivery. The special back-to-work legislation clearly takes the employer's side.

The government and Canada Post came to an agreement in advance, did they not?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this dispute between Canada Post and the union has been going on for a long time now, and this is causing growing damage to the Canadian economy and Canadians. This government is acting to protect the interests of Canadians.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is not a strike called by the workers. It is a lockout imposed by the management of Canada Post. It is the government's mess.

Now it is forcing through legislation what it could not claw back through negotiation. With this bill, the government is imposing wages that are lower than what management was prepared to offer these workers who deliver our mail.

Is the Prime Minister signalling to workers that if they do not accept the first offer that is given by management, that the Conservatives will simply come and legislate something worse? How is that possibly to be considered fair?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, there has been a series of strikes and lockouts in a dispute between these two parties that is beginning to damage a large number of people who do not sit at the table.

The government is acting to protect those interests. The wage rates laid out in the legislation are the rates that this government agreed to with its other public service workers, and that is a fair settlement for Canada Post workers as well.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is National Aboriginal Day, and New Democrats join in paying tribute to all first nations, Métis and Inuit people's cultures and traditions.

Three years after I joined with the Prime Minister to express our apologies for the residential school system, more clearly needs to be done. We need to build stronger relationships with aboriginal peoples and, on a nation-to-nation basis, reconcile their interests with those of all Canadians.

Would the Prime Minister share my assessment that Canada is moving too slowly?

● (1420)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I would say is that while much work remains to be done, considerable progress has been made over the past several years in areas such as education, human rights, water services, schools, and many other areas for aboriginal people in this country. More work remains to be done.

However, I do want to congratulate all aboriginal Canadians on this day, and also acknowledge and pay tribute to the growing number of aboriginal Canadians elected to serve in the Parliament of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that three years after an apology was given to aboriginal people, virtually nothing has changed. Too many aboriginal communities have been abandoned to their fate. Access to education is dramatically lower than elsewhere. Many people have trouble accessing clean drinking water, and the housing situation is deplorable. Families are piled on top of one another.

We thank the Prime Minister for his apology, but we want more than fine words. When will we see concrete action to help aboriginal people break out of the socio-economic stagnation they live in?

[English]

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, improving the quality of life for all first nations across Canada is a priority for the government.

A vital component of this is the elimination of poverty. The average income among first nations on reserve is 45% of the non-aboriginal population. The income assistance dependency rate is high at 35% compared to the national average of 5%.

The preferred approach that we have been taking is targeted. We are addressing these challenges through negotiated tripartite approaches involving Canada, the provinces, the territories and first nations.

Oral Questions

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, on National Aboriginal Day, we reflect on the struggles and achievements of first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

As parliamentarians we must deliver on the commitments under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Assembly of First Nations and the Inuit have issued calls for investment in education. As National Chief Shawn Atleo has said, "Now is the time to realize Shannen's dream".

Will the government, today, commit to equitable access to quality education for all children?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that today we launched the national panel on K to 12 education.

I did that jointly with National Chief Atleo on National Aboriginal Day with a very large and significant crowd of students and teachers. I think it was a most appropriate measure. We have also launched our website for people to consult beyond the round tables. I direct people to go there.

* * *

CANADA POST

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to the Prime Minister on the so-called act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services, Bill C-6.

Everyone recognizes, including the workers involved, that we want to see a resumption of postal services. The workers themselves have offered to go back to work.

Why then does that legislation completely limit the discretion of the arbitrator to find a fair agreement, deny the employees the ability to negotiate on salaries and, in fact, impose a salary regime for three years which is less than what the employer was prepared to pay?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, I do not accept much of the preamble of that question.

As I said earlier, the wage rates laid out in the legislation are the same as this government negotiated with its other public sector employees.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that makes no sense. The Prime Minister is clearly saying that Canada Post is an independent organization whose strategy is not controlled by the government. If that is in fact the case, how is it possible that you are imposing wages on the workers that are not what they negotiated with their own employer, but what you want to impose on them? That is not fair.

How does the Prime Minister justify this?

[English]

The Speaker: I wish to remind the hon. member for Toronto Centre to address his questions through the chair and not directly at other hon. members.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Oral Questions

● (1425)

[Translation]

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, this dispute has been going on for a long time and it is causing harm to other Canadians who are not at the bargaining table. We are acting in the best interests of the Canadian economy and treating all employees of the government of Canada equitably.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES CANADA

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, through you to the Prime Minister, let me ask this question.

After the 2010 strategic review the government booked savings of \$172 million in the Department of Public Works. We were told before the election by the then minister, Stockwell Day, President of the Treasury Board, that this would all be done through attrition. Now, after the election, we are told something completely different. We are told that the government is going to be firing auditors and that it will be letting people go in the hundreds.

Why did the government deceive the people of Canada before the election?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada employs hundreds of thousands of people. When it is necessary to make adjustments to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are well spent, we always make sure, wherever possible, that we do that through attrition or reassignment. In this case, we are cutting expenditures that are not necessary. They are duplicative and will not affect the audit services of the Government of Canada.

[Translation]

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, employees are required for a business or government to function. The economy means jobs. Jobs mean consumers. No jobs mean no consumers and no economy. Yesterday, it was announced that 700 jobs would be eliminated at Public Works and Government Services Canada. These cutbacks are a severe blow to the regional economy. They will not help to control spending and will hinder the economic recovery; that much is clear.

Such being the case, how can the government justify these savage layoffs?

Mr. Jacques Gaurde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians gave us a clear mandate to keep taxes low and to balance the budget by 2014-2015. We have taken a close look at spending and identified the least effective and lower priority programs in order to achieve the slated savings of approximately \$98.6 million for Canadian taxpayers.

[English]

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government fired 92 auditors at Public Works, the

same department responsible for stopping corruption and misspending.

The most essential role of the public service is to ensure that public money is spent according to the rules. When a government starts to fire the very people who are paid to verify, audit and control, the message is, "If you don't tell us what we want to hear, we'll fire you".

How can removing the controllers of public spending help control public spending?

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gaurde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have taken a close look at spending and identified those programs that are least effective and less of a priority. This will not have any impact on internal audit services.

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[English]

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been two weeks since the Treasury Board President was taken down to the Auditor General's principal's office and he has been hiding under his desk ever since. We now know why.

There is a criminal investigation into how \$50 million was diverted into his riding. I suggest the RCMP read the Auditor General's report, which lays out in excruciating detail how the three amigos, the mayor, the hotel manager and the minister, diverted money for these dubious pork barrel projects.

My question to the missing member for Muskoka, is it not time to come clean in this House?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, another day and another public relations stunt from the opposition.

Let us look at what the interim Auditor General said in his report. I would remind you, Mr. Speaker, that the Auditor General is an independent officer of Parliament, mandated to report to this House. The report says:

—no evidence to suggest that it was a deliberate attempt to mislead.

It also says:

I'm not aware of any specific law that was broken.

The Auditor General has made some fair observations about the process with which the estimates are presented to this House, and how grants and contributions programs could be administered. We fully accept that good counsel and will be following it in the future.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote the man who has disappeared in this House, who said yesterday in committee that it was factually incorrect to say that money was diverted. Page 37 in the Auditor General's report clearly contradicts him. If he wants to take that up with the cops, I am sure it is going to go very well for him.

I would like to say to this House that if he gets away with this \$50 million scheme, then start counting the spoons and silverware dear public because they have just given this man the keys to the Treasury Board.

● (1430)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the comment made by the member opposite. I did not hear a question.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I once again asked the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka to explain the \$50 million spending spree. Unfortunately, his critic was unable to tell us why documents explaining how projects were selected were unavailable.

The President of the Treasury Board still refuses to address this matter in the House. Today, we understand why: the RCMP is conducting an investigation.

Is the RCMP carrying out an investigation because, as the Auditor General has indicated, this spending is completely unjustifiable?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The member opposite said overspending. In fact, this fund was under spent by more than \$5 million.

The money was spent on each of the 32 infrastructure projects. Every single penny was accounted for. Every construction project was on time. Costs came in under budget and all costs recorded were used for the purposes intended. In terms of documentation, there is an individual contribution agreement for each of the 32 projects.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board is attempting to spend \$50 million without justification; however, this is so suspicious that it has sparked an RCMP investigation.

We are now realizing that this government's actions look a lot like what the Liberals did during the sponsorship scandal. The same practices lead to the same outcomes, and that is why the RCMP is investigating this dubious spending.

Will the President of the Treasury Board co-operate with the RCMP and provide all relevant documents?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be frank, there is a public relations stunt going forward. The interim Auditor General has spoken very strongly to this issue. I have read two specific quotes when he released his report. He came forward with some legitimate concerns about grants and contributions. He came forward with some legitimate observations on how we can report to Parliament in a more open and transparent way. We fully accepted the good advice of the Auditor General.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE G20 SUMMIT

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one year after the G20 summit in Toronto, we are learning new details about that monumental fiasco.

The charges laid against 100 or so students who were sleeping in the University of Toronto gymnasium have been dropped because the police had no warrant when they made the arrests. A warrant is a necessary prerequisite in our justice system.

When will this government commit itself to holding a public inquiry to shed light on the mismanagement and the record arrests at the G8 and G20 summits?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada was responsible for the safety and security of all those involved in the summits, from world leaders, visitors, delegates, and those who lived in the surrounding areas. If the member has any specific concerns about police conduct, he should take those up concerns with the appropriate authorities.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been a year since the G20 summit in Toronto. It was not only a mismanaged boondoggle, it was the largest mass arrest in Canada's history and Canadians are now shocked to learn that it was completely unnecessary. Well over half of those detained had their charges dropped. Only a handful have been convicted. Clearly something went wrong.

Can the minister explain why so many Canadians were arrested without cause?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite is aware, specific bodies exist to handle complaints regarding the conduct of police. As I have said many times before, I encourage anyone who has a complaint in respect of any specific incident to bring it forward to the appropriate body. In this case, it would be a provincial body.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the G20 summit is truly a blot on Canadian history. Many women were arrested and strip-searched, they were denied access to hygiene products and they were not even able to go to the toilet without being constantly within the sight of police officers. Many cases of sexual harassment have also been reported. Only a public inquiry into the mismanagement of the G20 summit will get to the bottom of things and restore public confidence.

My question is simple: When is the government going to announce a public inquiry? When is the government going to take action?

Oral Questions

●(1435)

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, there are in fact processes in place to deal with these types of concerns. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on any disciplinary or criminal procedure, but I would encourage the member, if she has specific knowledge about any specific event, to take that to the appropriate provincial authority and allow the authorities who are designated to deal with these complaints to handle them appropriately.

*[Translation]***GOVERNMENT SPENDING**

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we now know there has been an outcome in the Muskoka scandal. In reply to a letter that our former colleague Marlene Jennings wrote to the director of public prosecutions, there is now an RCMP investigation into an apparent misappropriation of funds in the riding of the current President of the Treasury Board. Unlike the NDP, which is trying to get its 15 seconds, I want an answer.

Can the Prime Minister tell me whether his President of the Treasury Board and his Minister of Foreign Affairs have been contacted by the RCMP, and whether he is prepared to cooperate himself?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us just call this what it is. This is a defeated Liberal candidate in the last election who was pulling off a public relations stunt rather than focusing on the issues that really matter to Canadians.

Let me say this. The Auditor General, in releasing his report, said two things: one, that there was no evidence to suggest that it was a deliberate attempt to mislead and, two, he is not aware of any specific law that was broken. Obviously the Auditor General's report that was tabled in the House is substantially different from the one involved in the Liberal public relations stunt.

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are now making cuts they knew about well before the recent election but chose to hide. On the chopping block are thousands of jobs, including the entire Audit Services Canada department, the auditors that serve all the other departments of government. This is a rather self-serving move for a government that was found in contempt due to secrecy and dishonesty, I would say. In fact, the Prime Minister just claimed auditors need to be fired to ensure Canada's dollars are well spent. That is incredible.

Why can the minister not tell us why he has been hiding the planned program cuts from—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have given us a clear mandate to keep taxes low and balance the budget in 2014-2015. We have examined spending carefully and we have identified the least productive and lowest priority programs for achieving savings.

[English]

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know the government cut \$53 million from DFO before any strategic review. The Maritime Rescue sub-centres in St. John's and Quebec City have become victims of these cuts.

The government has been silent on what other cuts are coming. However, the President of the Treasury Board is quoted as saying government employees will get first notice about job losses and that it would not be done through the media.

I ask the minister when the employees in St. John's were notified of their jobs cuts and is it true that he is now notifying other employees of DFO that they are losing their jobs?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we like to be quite clear. We have a responsibility to Canadians to ensure that we spend their dollars wisely. We are cutting programs that we do not need.

I have answered the question in terms of the facility in Newfoundland on a number of occasions.

I have to advise the member that we have made significant improvements to the Canadian Coast Guard to the tune of 33% personnel in Newfoundland and \$1.4 billion in investment.

*[Translation]***STOCK MARKETS**

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the London Stock Exchange is trying to take over the TMX to gain control of Canadian capital markets. New concerns are being raised throughout the country concerning the takeover of the TMX, including those voiced by the Premier of Quebec and by other provinces. Now more than ever we need a public consultation process.

Why is the minister refusing to listen to the Canadian public? Why is he refusing to hold public hearings on this matter?

[English]

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has received an application for a review under the Investment Canada Act from the London Stock Exchange Group.

The minister's officials are conducting a thorough analysis of this proposed investment and will consult extensively, including with affected provinces and territories, to ensure that they have all of the information required to make the best decision.

It should be noted that the minister will only approve applications where an investment demonstrates that it is likely to be of net benefit to Canadians.

● (1440)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives seem to like secretive closed-door decisions. The NDP welcomes public input. That is the difference.

The Prime Minister agreed with us that the Investment Canada Act needs to be substantially changed; public hearings, public conditions, penalties for non-compliance, but so far it has been yet another Conservative failure, hashtag fail, and we are getting a lot of Conservative failures in the first few weeks of this Parliament.

Canadians do not want more secrecy. Canadians want public consultations. What does the government have against open and transparent public consultations?

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, foreign investment is the key to the growth of the Canadian economy and our government will continue to encourage it.

The hon. member is new to the industry committee, but he might consult with his colleague who was on the committee in the previous Parliament when we put forward a motion to study the Investment Canada Act. It was consistently delayed by opposition members.

* * *

[Translation]

SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a large part of our economic success is attributable to the dynamism of small and medium-sized businesses, which generate approximately 70% of jobs in Canada. Rather than supporting this driver of our economy, the Conservative government prefers to cut the taxes of big corporations, which are already raking in gargantuan profits.

When will this government take concrete action to support the real creators of jobs in this country, the small and medium-sized businesses?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform my colleague that this government has taken concrete action, and has been doing so for quite some time. Right from the outset, when we were first elected, we reduced the small business tax rate from 12% to 11% in our first budget, in 2006-2007. We continued to do so in subsequent budgets, helping to increase the turnaround for small businesses from \$300,000 to \$500,000, and so on and so forth. I am very disappointed that my opposition colleague did not vote for our last budget, which once again helped Canadian small businesses to be more successful.

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have no job creation strategy.

Oral Questions

In the election campaign, our party announced that it wanted to generate concrete jobs in Canada through SMEs. In concrete terms, we proposed a tax credit for job creation. We proposed a tax cut for small businesses from 11% to 9%.

Is the government willing to listen to these ideas and take action in order to stimulate job creation?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that business people create jobs throughout Canada, whether in Beauce, Vancouver or Newfoundland. We support these business people. The recent budget proves this.

I would like to remind my colleague that since the last recession, 500,000 new jobs were created here in Canada thanks to these business people, and we are going to continue to support them. That is why we are here, to create jobs. The economy is our top priority, and I would like the NDP to make the economy its top priority, too.

* * *

[English]

ROYAL VISIT

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our constitutional monarchy is an important part of Canada's heritage and history, as well as its future.

Last year, we were honoured to host Her Royal Highness, The Queen of Canada.

Would the Minister of Canadian Heritage please tell the House about this summer's tour by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased, on behalf of the Government of Canada, to welcome the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge to Canada on their royal tour. This is the third royal tour that Canada has seen in 18 months.

[Translation]

We are delighted that the royal couple have decided to visit Canada on their first international tour as newlyweds.

[English]

During the royal couple's visit, they will watch the Canada Day noon show here on Parliament Hill, participate in the Freedom of the City ceremony with the Royal 22nd Regiment in Quebec City, tour the Canadian Coast Guard ship, the *Edward Cornwallis*, in P.E.I., meet with the Canadian Ranger Patrol in the Northwest Territories, and participate in the Calgary Stampede parade.

[Translation]

This royal tour is a fine opportunity to show the pride we feel in our traditions.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

All Canadians welcome the royal couple to Canada on this, the third royal visit in 18 months. It will be a great time for Canada.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the 2011 budget talks about introducing rules for prepaid credit cards and credit cheque advances, without explaining how it will be done.

With household debt skyrocketing, we need a strategy now.

Will the government commit to introducing comprehensive legislation that would protect consumers from being gouged by credit companies and will the government commit to a timeline for introducing this legislation?

• (1445)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the last part of the question, that would be in the subsequent budget implementation acts following the one that is before the House now.

We have already brought in credit card regulations, as I am sure the member opposite knows, requiring clear and simple information, timely advance notice of rates and fee changes, and limiting any consumer business practices.

There is more to be done. It is outlined in the budget.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada reported yesterday that household debt has skyrocketed again to a record new level. The household debt-to-income ratio is now around 150%. The federal deficit-to-income ratio, by comparison, is just 34%.

When will the government stop blaming Canadians and act to protect consumers from the predatory practices of credit card companies?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I understand the strange position, the contradictory position, taken by the member opposite, he is saying that the government ought to act to restrict credit at the same time that we ought to encourage consumer confidence, economic activity, job creation, and growth in the country. Those are contradictory goals.

We have said to Canadians very clearly that interest rates have only one way to go, and that is up, over time, and they ought to be prudent in their spending.

We have not seen any evidence of any imprudence, in terms of the Canadian housing market.

[Translation]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Statistics Canada confirmed the seriousness of the household debt crisis in Canada. On average, there is a \$1.50 debt for every dollar earned. The list of experts sounding the alarm is growing longer: the Bank of Canada, Statistics Canada, CGA-Canada. Everyone criticizes the, quote, disastrous situation for indebted families.

How can the government justify its inaction in the face of this family debt crisis?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, interest rates have been low for some time, as I am sure the member opposite appreciates. That has meant some continued economic growth, moderate economic growth in Canada, which is welcome.

We anticipate, as the private sector economists do, that we will continue to have that moderate economic growth in Canada, which will lead us to balanced budgets.

[Translation]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the real problem is that the government has left Canadian families to their fate with their record debt levels. Families are no longer able to save for their future or their children's future.

The indifference of the Conservatives is a threat to all our futures. Will the government finally protect consumers rather than the profits of the big banks?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian economy is in good shape. It is the best shape in the G7. The IMF says so.

The Conference Board of Canada says:

Canada's economic fundamentals—fiscal policies, tax policy, monetary policy and management of the exchange rate—are arguably in the best shape in the developed world.

Canada is doing well.

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last month the Federal Court ordered a judicial review in the case of over 750 fishermen involved in the Atlantic groundfish licence retirement program, who have been fighting for fairness before the court since 2006.

Fishermen in this program were not treated equally or fairly, and paid thousands of dollars more in taxes than they should have.

Will the Minister of National Revenue do the right thing and immediately settle with these fishermen who are being treated so unfairly?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can inform the House and those fishers in Atlantic Canada affected directly by this court case that the government will not appeal this decision, and CRA will now reconsider the fishers' claim as requested by the Federal Court.

I would also remind the House that our government created the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, along with the Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman. We have the absolute expectation that CRA administers Canadian tax law in a manner that is fair and consistent for all Canadians.

● (1450)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, Hank Tepper, a New Brunswick farmer held in a Lebanese jail for three months, asked the Minister of Justice to charge him here in Canada for the offence alleged by Algerian authorities.

Every element of the alleged offence occurred in Canada. Why not lay the charge here, allow the Lebanese authorities to send him back to Canada, where he can clear his name and appear before a Canadian court with the protection of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

He is anxious to make full answer and defence to the charges against him. Why does the minister not do the right thing, charge him in Canada, as his lawyer asked today, have him come back here and let him clear his name in Canada?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is very concerned about this case and Mr. Tepper's family in Canada during this difficult time.

Consular officials in Lebanon have been actively providing consular assistance and support to Mr. Tepper and his family since his arrest, including regular visits to ensure his health and well-being.

We will continue to engage with senior Lebanese authorities to request due process and a timely and transparent handling of these facts.

* * *

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's position on asbestos is morally and ethically reprehensible, and even as we speak, teams of Department of Justice lawyers have been dispatched to Geneva to sabotage the Rotterdam Convention once again, the list of hazardous chemicals that require prior informed consent to trade.

Canada is already an international pariah for its policy on asbestos, for dumping it into the third world when we will not use it ourselves.

How can we in all good conscience block efforts to put labels on asbestos to warn its recipients to take health and safety protections against this class A carcinogen? What kind of country are we?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for over 30 years the Government of Canada has promoted the safe and controlled use of chrysotile, both domestically and internationally.

Our position at Rotterdam is the same as it is in Canada. All scientific reviews clearly confirm that chrysotile fibres can be used safely under controlled situations.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, public health experts and occupational health experts the world over agree that there is no safe way to use asbestos.

Oral Questions

Not a single reliable study in the world shows that asbestos can be used safely, as the Minister of Natural Resources contends.

Asbestos should be added to the Rotterdam Convention.

How can the minister continue to defend the indefensible?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, all the recent scientific reviews show that chrysotile can be used in a safe and controlled manner. The Chrysotile Institute is mandated by the federal government, the Government of Quebec and the chrysotile workers unions to support the attempts to promote the safe and controlled use of chrysotile in Canada and around the world.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the label of tough on crime is not something that Canadians would generally associate with the Liberal Party. In fact, quite the opposite.

Yet today, in an attempt to change the channel, a Liberal senator has been discussing his views on how our government should deal with crime. Interestingly, he describes keeping dangerous criminals off the street as a folly. I am sure victims of crime and members of the House would strongly disagree.

Can the Minister of Public Safety please update the House on what the government is doing to keep Canadians safe?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his support of legislation to protect victims of crime.

Canadians gave our Conservative government a strong mandate to get tough on crime, and we will not apologize for putting the protection of law-abiding Canadians first. That is why we have made significant investments in the RCMP. We have seen recruitment numbers boosted to record levels that former governments could only dream about.

Unlike the NDP and the Liberal Party, we will not put criminals back on the street early just to save a buck.

* * *

● (1455)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 4 last year, a young Canadian, Colin Rutherford, was kidnapped in Afghanistan and accused of being a spy.

Oral Questions

His kidnappers have contacted Canadian officials with their demands. His family has not been told what the demands are. Once again, a Canadian overseas needs the help of the government.

Other than lip service, what have the Minister of Foreign Affairs and his officials done to secure the release and safe return of Colin Rutherford to Canada?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is aware of this case.

Due to security and privacy concerns, it would be absolutely inappropriate for us to comment on this case.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's lack of transparency around visitor visas is causing heartache for families right across Canada at times of weddings and funerals.

One in five will be denied a visa this year. For Newton—North Delta, the percentage is much higher. Visitors have no idea why they are rejected or what they can do to qualify. People are frustrated and they want answers.

Will the government implement a transparent and open appeal process for visas?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under our immigration law, for decades the power to decide which foreign nationals can enter Canada and receive temporary resident visas has been delegated to independent, highly trained members of our professional public service, our visa officers.

Consistently over the past several decades, about 20% of visa applications have not been approved. That has been constant through changes of government and changes of law.

It is visa officers' responsibility to make sure that people demonstrate their bona fide intentions to return back to their countries of origin. We commend our public servants for doing important work.

We ask applicants to submit documents that are complete and applications that demonstrate their intention to return home.

* * *

SYRIA

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for months the current Syrian regime has been engaged in a brutal crackdown on its own people.

Yesterday the current Syrian president went on Syrian television to address the crisis. Rather than giving the Syrian people the real reforms they were seeking, he dealt in generalities and gave no real timeline for any reforms.

Today the security forces killed even more people. Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs please update the House on Canada's position on this situation?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government and I believe all Canadians strongly support the people of Syria in their peaceful efforts to realize democracy and human rights.

Syrians have endured terrible crimes at the hands of this regime. Canada has joined several of our allies in saying that the president of Syria has a choice: he can reform or he can go. The status quo is no longer acceptable.

While Canada does not have a Syrian ambassador posted in our country, I want to tell my friends opposite and on the government side of the House that the government has summoned the chargé d'affaires on three occasions since the protests began, on April 29, June 3 and as recently as June 15.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC BRIDGE

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec Bridge is the longest cantilever bridge in the world. The preservation of this architectural jewel and the safety of a bridge that is travelled by 35,000 vehicles a day are major issues for our region and have been for years. The bridge recently had to undergo emergency repairs.

What is the minister waiting for to protect the safety of the people in and around Quebec City? Is he waiting for another emergency closure?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

He is referring to an emergency closure that happened in the Montreal region, where the federal government did its homework. The Quebec government closed that part of the bridge.

The Quebec Bridge is owned by a company called Canadian National. This case is currently before the courts so I must leave my comments at that.

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**PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES
CANADA**

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after \$50 million for border infrastructure was used for other purposes by the former industry minister, now internal auditors are pointing the finger at the Privy Council Office for having thousands of dollars in unauthorized expenses.

What is the government, which claims to want to better manage public funds, doing? It is now eliminating the Public Works Canada internal audit service, which manages billions of dollars worth of government contracts.

How can we have any hope that taxpayers' money will be well spent when the government is getting rid of a strong internal audit service at Public Works Canada?

● (1500)

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have carefully examined spending and we have identified the programs that are least effective and less of a priority in order to save money. This process was carried out under the supervision of former national security advisor, Margaret Bloodworth, and former auditor general, Denis Desautels.

RESUMPTION AND CONTINUATION OF POSTAL SERVICES LEGISLATION

NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I give notice that, with respect to the consideration of Government Business No. 3, at the next sitting, a minister of the Crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that the debate not be further adjourned.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE SENIORS AND STRENGTHENING CANADA'S ECONOMY ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-3, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

[English]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to make the ruling on Bill C-3, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011. There are seven motions in amendments standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-3.

Motions Nos. 1 to 7 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

I will now propose Motions Nos. 1 to 7 to the House.

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-3 be amended by deleting Clause 20.

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-3 be amended by deleting Clause 21.

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-3 be amended by deleting Clause 22.

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-3 be amended by deleting Clause 23.

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-3 be amended by deleting Clause 24.

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-3 be amended by deleting Clause 25.

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-3 be amended by deleting Clause 26.

Government Orders

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during question period the member for Timmins—James Bay repeatedly made reference to the absence of a member from the chamber. The member is not new in the House and he would know that violates the Standing Orders of the House. I would ask the Speaker ensure he does not continue to do this in the future.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for raising that. I will take a look at the blues and see what exactly was said.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I do not recall that he said he was not present. He said that he was hiding under his seat.

The Speaker: I will take a look for myself and see what was said. I thank the hon. member for his help.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify the record because I do think it is very important. I take my choice of words very seriously. When I said “the missing member for Muskoka” I was not implying that he was missing from the House. I said that he was missing from doing his job.

I want to make it clear that he was in the House, but he refused to stand and be responsible for his portfolio.

The Speaker: We have heard enough on this matter.

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE SENIORS AND STRENGTHENING CANADA'S ECONOMY ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-3, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motion in Group No. 1 to 7.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the amendments, which would have the impact of removing part 7 from the bill.

The rush by the government to pass the budget implementation act is ostensibly to get increased benefits out to seniors. This is something we have campaigned on and supported. We certainly want to see every senior get out of poverty. However, what takes up almost half of the bill is a section on mortgage insurance. It is a section we believe requires further debate and examination. It needs to have the light of day shine in. What is the rush to pass this part of the bill? That is why we would argue, with our amendments, to take this section out of the bill and examine it in good time.

We are talking about the delivery of a fundamental social good, and that is housing. We have a crisis of affordability in housing in the country. We have many people under or poorly housed.

Government Orders

We are talking about the delivery system for housing in Canada and breaking off part of that delivery system where profits can be made, mortgage insurance, and handing it to U.S. multinational mortgage companies that played a role in creating the housing bubble in the United States, which led to the global financial crash. They provided mortgages at extremely appealing terms to people who could not assess the risk and many of whom could not afford to take on that risk.

In many respects, this is the housing equivalent of privatizing a service like health care, something that is so fundamental to Canadians. In the current system with CMHC, the risk is shared by all Canadians so as to achieve the widest public benefit. In this case, it is meeting the housing needs of Canadians effectively and with affordability.

The government argues that speed is of the essence. Yet further reinforcing the privatization of the mortgage insurance market is a major public issue that deserves further debate. Canadians need to know if this is truly in their best interest, but the government would rather not open this up for debate.

Effective lobbying of both previous Liberal and Conservative governments by U.S. insurance giants like AIG, Genworth and PMI was rewarded when first the Liberals and then the Conservatives welcomed this competition into our housing insurance market.

Promoters of private insurance talked about the innovation that the private sector would foster. In fact, that was said in the U.S. before the housing crash. Innovation meant dressing up high-risk mortgages and veiled financial instruments that no one understood or whose risks were hidden. Canada does not need that kind of innovation. The fact remains that the case for offering private multinationals access to Canada's mortgage insurance market has not been convincingly made. We would like to have more time for examination.

The effect of having U.S. private mortgage insurance giants like the now defunct AIG or Genworth enter the Canadian market was to sign up borrowers for risky mortgages: \$56 billion in 40-year mortgages, the most expensive and least flexible mortgages there are, \$10 billion of which requires no money down. These instruments entice many Canadians into debt far over their heads.

The finance minister justified the arrival of the U.S. giants by arguing greater choice and innovation, that this would benefit consumers and promote home ownership. The housing bubble, especially south of the border, showed that these companies created tragic results. One U.S. executive told the *Globe and Mail* in a story at the time that the 40-year mortgage, "just becomes a mechanism for borrowing more than you probably should have".

• (1505)

Since the government backs 100% of CMHC's mortgage insurance risks, it concluded that it should level the playing field for private mortgage insurers by guaranteeing their liabilities, too. The deal is it guarantees 90% of up to \$300 billion in insurance liabilities for a 10% premium, \$300 billion of public money to guarantee the liabilities of private insurers, most of whom would be foreign or American insurers.

Why would Canadians want to sign up for this? It is certainly something we need to examine. Have we really learned nothing? Why are these companies still around? Why are we still guaranteeing their liabilities?

Canada is the second largest mortgage insurance market in the world. Until the Liberals opened the door to GE, now Genworth, Canadians provided their own insurance and shared their own risk. Now we still share the risk, but pay profits to U.S. multinationals. This fits a pattern the government likes to repeat.

One argument for welcoming U.S. competition for CMHC, the mortgage insurer Canadians already own, was that Canadian insurance rates were too high and competition would bring them down. What happened? The *Globe and Mail* said that the rates stayed the same. In committee Monday, the head of CMHC, Karen Kinsley, said that the CMHC price was still better. Therefore, competition has not reduced the cost to consumers.

Also in the committee meeting on Monday, Ms. Kinsley told us that CMHC also ensures the social housing sector, apartments, low-income housing, non-profits and other affordable housing both in urban and rural areas and she pointed out that the private insurers chose not to go after that business. Therefore, we have a situation where the government and its private sector allies like the C.D. Howe Institute talk a good line about competition, but instead are cherry-picking and leave the CMHC to cover the social housing and rental sectors, where the risks are higher and the returns are lower. Why would we willingly put the mortgage insurer taxpayers own in that situation? In other words, it undermines its sustainability.

Do members know how many other industrialized countries guarantee the policies of non-government mortgage money? Experts in committee on Monday could not name one, not one other country in the world that backs the risks of private mortgage insurers, but Canada wants to increase our liability. Why are we being so generous?

In May 2006, the government announced more U.S. mortgage insurers were welcome and increased the value of the taxpayers' guarantee to \$200 billion. Five years later, in this bill, it is saying that guarantee should be \$300 billion. The government has done no studies that we have been privy to on the impact of that decision. Nor has it done due diligence to date on the implications of yet again broadening the taxpayers' liability in guaranteeing \$300 billion in private obligations today. It is very curious behaviour for people who like to betray themselves as better economic managers.

What do Canadians get in return for such generosity that they would not have gotten from their own company, the CMHC? When the committee and its Senate counterpart were holding hearings on the private mortgage insurance provisions back in 2006, AIG's top executive in Canada had this to say:

In terms of exposure to the government, the practical likelihood of AIG, an organization with \$800 billion in assets, ever coming to the government for anything as it relates to a claim is not nil, but it is as close to nil as it possibly could be.

The government was all too happy to take that assurance for its ill-thought out policies. Two years later, the U.S. government had to pump \$150 billion into AIG when its practices drove it into the ground. Why would we again place the same faith, \$300 billion worth, in these companies today?

I would urge reflection and reconsideration. For that reason, we are urging, with these amendments, that this section on mortgage insurance be taken out of the bill and postponed for debate at a later date.

• (1510)

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, fortunately, I also had the opportunity to be at that meeting and I recognize that the member was there as well.

I would like the member's comments in relation to the response that was given by the witnesses stating that the increase the government was proposing would not increase percentage risk to Canadians by 1%. In fact, they suggested that this would be good for the economy and good for Canadians and, quite frankly, bragged significantly about the current good news story of CMHC, how well it was doing and what a great profit it was giving back to the Canadian people who own it and ultimately will receive the benefit of it. They stated clearly that we have an excellent marketplace here in Canada and that things are going very well in Canada relative to the rest of the world. It actually was a very good news story.

I do not know how the member can take something bad out of that but I would like to hear her comments in relation specifically to the fact that no increase in risk to Canadians would happen as a result of this particular amendment.

• (1515)

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, any time we increase the potential liability in the tens of billions of dollars, that it is something that requires greater reflection and greater study.

As I said, in 2006, our liability for these private insurers was \$200 billion. With this bill, our liability would be \$300 billion.

If there are no defaults, then it is true that we are not paying anything out. However, should there be defaults there could be future liability. In fact, we have heard real concern from the Bank of Canada regarding the steep rise in housing prices, the lack of affordable housing in Canada and the incredible indebtedness that Canadians are faced with.

This needs greater examination, which is why we are proposing a delay.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my new colleague an opportunity here to correct the record.

Government Orders

First and foremost, if claims are made in this House, they must be accurate and they must be factual. They must be based on things that have actually been said if one says that they are what was said.

I would invite my colleague to correct the record. She talked about other countries that have this type of system but not one country was mentioned. Let us start with Norway, which was mentioned, and which, oddly enough, happens to be a socialist country.

I would also encourage her to correct the record when it comes to the numbers she is using. It was repeatedly stated in committee, and we repeatedly attempted to correct her numbers, that it is presently at \$250 billion, not \$200 billion, and will go to \$300 billion.

I invite the member to correct the record on those two issues, please.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to again clarify that in 2006 the limit of taxpayers' liability was \$200 billion. It was subsequently increased to \$250 billion. The proposal today is to take that liability to \$300 billion, which is a huge amount of dollars that Canadians would have to back up.

Secondly, when asked which countries around the world have public money backing private mortgage insurers, there was no country that was named that had a system like that. There are private insurers that pay their own premiums and self-insure, but not one country was named where the government backstops the risk of private insurers operating in the housing mortgage market.

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, if she is objecting to this particular section now, I would like to know from the member why, at that particular meeting when she and the NDP had an opportunity to vote against the bill, they actually voted for it. They did not vote against it. As we mentioned earlier, this is a classic example of sucking and blowing at the same time.

The member opposite should make up her mind. If she is now going to vote against the bill that she had voted for in committee, it sends the wrong message to Canadians. They want to see this Parliament work and that is what we are trying to do.

• (1520)

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, we did vote against this section of the bill.

I would also take this opportunity to correct the record. It may have sounded as though I called the CEO of CMHC by the name of Tinsley. It is in fact Karen Kinsley. I just want to better enunciate that for the record.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do want to take this opportunity to also state that I was at that meeting and the NDP did in fact vote for our bill. Regardless of what has been said here, the facts remain. The truth is that the NDP voted for the bill in committee and have now flip-flopped for whatever reason they want to provide. That is up to them.

[Translation]

I would like to share my time with the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

Government Orders

I sincerely thank the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance for quickly studying and passing this important bill. As hon. members know, the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act includes a number of measures from the 2011 budget and is a key part of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a plan that keeps taxes low to stimulate growth and jobs. Our economic growth shows that Canada's economic action plan is working and that the Conservative government is on the right track with our economic recovery.

Let us look at the facts: Canada's economy has seen seven consecutive quarters of growth. Since July 2009, we have created almost 560,000 net new jobs, 80% of which are full time. Canada's unemployment rate is considerably lower than that of the United States, something we have not seen in over 30 years. Little wonder that countless independent experts and observers have been near unanimous in their praise for Canada's economy. For example, Claude Picher, an economic and financial columnist for *La Presse*, said:

It is true that all of Canada's economic indicators are quite positive when compared with other G7 countries. Canada has weathered the recession better than the others. It is certainly the G7 champion in terms of economic growth and job creation.

However, too many Canadians are still looking for work, and the global economic recovery remains fragile. The financial difficulties of some European countries, such as Greece, attest to the fact that there are still international issues that could affect us. That is why protecting the economy has been and will remain our government's top priority. And that includes implementing the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

[English]

The supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy act contains many important measures that will not only support our economic recovery but also help everyday Canadians, especially seniors, such as: assisting Canada's most in need seniors with a significant boost to the guaranteed income supplement; supporting health care and social programs at the provincial level with nearly \$1 billion in payments to provinces eligible for the temporary total transfer protections extension to 2011-12; encouraging young entrepreneurs with \$20 million to help the Canadian Youth Business Foundation; enhancing federal support for part-time students; improving the registered disability savings plan; supporting Canada's veterans with tax relief for the Royal Canadian Legion; maintaining Canada's leadership in genomics research with \$65 million for Genome Canada; reinforcing the stability of Canada's housing market with increased government oversight of the mortgage insurance industry; and much more.

I think all parliamentarians recognize that Canada's seniors sacrificed a lot to build this great country and I believe we all want a strong support system for their retirement. That is why our Conservative government has taken significant action since 2006 to improve the quality of life of Canadian seniors.

The measures taken include providing seniors and pensioners with over \$2 billion in annual tax relief and creating a minister of state for seniors to ensure they have a dedicated voice in government to address their issues.

However, there is always more to be done. Unfortunately, there are still too many seniors with fixed incomes experiencing financial difficulties. Many of these low-income seniors are widowers who made sacrifices of themselves to stay home, to raise their families and better their communities. As a result of that, they do not have a pension income.

To show our appreciation to these seniors and assist them, our Conservative government is proposing to provide an additional GIS top up annually of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This would represent the single biggest increase to the GIS in over 25 long years. The new GIS top up will help over 680,000 of Canada's poorest and most vulnerable seniors starting July 1, providing them with improved financial peace of mind.

It is little wonder that the Service Employees International Union, representing front-line health care providers and other service industry workers, applauded the GIS increase as, "A win for every senior living in poverty in Canada".

I want to be crystal clear with all elected members in this House and all appointed senators in the Senate when I say that Canada's most vulnerable and poorest seniors are absolutely counting on the GIS top up and they need this bill passed quickly to allow it to come into effect on July 1, 2011, as promised.

I have heard some in Parliament smugly dismiss the GIS top up as only an extra few dollars a year. I challenge those parliamentarians to say that to the countless widows and seniors who are counting on the monthly GIS top up to make ends meet. I challenge members to ask those poor seniors, who do not have the luxuries we as parliamentarians enjoy, if those extra few dollars will make a difference to them as they worry day by day about how they will pay for their rent and food.

I know the answer because I have actually asked them. They need this money and it will make a world of difference for many of them. They are depending on us to ease their financial burden and the hundreds of dollars they will collect from the government's proposed GIS top up are absolutely crucial to their future.

I ask all parliamentarians, both here and in the Senate, to please put partisanship antics aside, do the right thing and pass this bill before we rise. Royal assent must be ensured to allow the increased GIS cheques to start going out July 1. Let us give these vulnerable seniors the dignity and respect they deserve.

I also implore my colleagues to consider another important measure in this bill that has the potential to change lives substantially. Genome Canada is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to supporting Canada's research leadership in genomics.

Genomics is the science of studying the genome or blueprint contained in the DNA of a human or other species, along with what happens when certain genes interact with each other and the environment. Genomics research is helping Canadians make scientific breakthroughs and advances in important areas, such as health, fisheries, forestry, agriculture and the environment.

● (1525)

To date, the government has provided over \$900 million to Genome Canada. This support has helped establish Canada as a world leader in genomics research, including in the areas of cancer, infectious and rare genetic diseases, adverse drug reactions and crop sciences. What is more, Genome Canada-funded research has contributed to the development and training of thousands of highly skilled individuals and the creation of more than 20 new companies.

I am proud to note that Genome Canada has a centre in my hometown of Winnipeg as well as centres in Vancouver, Calgary, Halifax, Montreal and Toronto. The additional \$65 million for Genome Canada proposed in today's legislation would launch a new competition in the area of human health, while also covering ongoing operating costs.

Genome Canada President Dr. Pierre Meulien has expressed his appreciation for this new financial support, noting:

—it provides the means necessary to continue advancing our genomics...It also reiterates the government's interest and priority in cultivating a genomics enterprise in Canada—

[Translation]

These are just two of the many important measures we are proposing in the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act. These measures will help Canadian families, particularly the most vulnerable ones. This bill is an essential part of implementing the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, which will ensure that our economy recovers for the benefit of all Canadians, today and in the years to come. For these reasons, I once again call upon the House to support this bill promptly and without delay.

[English]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. parliamentary secretary could tell the House, after the private sector was allowed into the mortgage insurance sector in Canada, how many 40-year zero-down mortgages were introduced, and how many Canadians have these mortgages which we know are the most risky, least flexible and most expensive for Canadian consumers.

● (1530)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I am so glad my colleague has asked a question about those very dangerous 40-year amortized mortgages that no longer exist. Thanks to who? Thanks to this government that changed the rules and now we see that an amortized mortgage is reduced to a much smaller limit.

It is thanks to this government that recognized early in the recession that the housing market was very much at risk in other areas of the world. It is because we took actions very early that the housing market in Canada is seen as the strongest in the world. I continue to be proud of the measures that our government is going to continue to take to secure oversight in that area.

Government Orders

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question to the parliamentary secretary, based on her last response.

She just claimed credit for her government's ending the ridiculous policy of 40-year mortgages with no down payment. I agree with her. It was a dangerous, reckless policy, and we supported the government's ultimate decision to change that policy.

However, is she not aware that it was her government and her Conservative finance minister who, in his first budget in 2006, introduced to Canada 40-year mortgages with no down payment? Is she aware of that?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I am well aware of the history of amortized mortgages and that is why our government and the finance minister recognized early on that the recession was actually going to take hold in a number of areas in the world where the housing market was going to be responsible for a significant decline. Thanks to the finance minister of the Conservative government, the amortized time period was, in fact, reduced a first time to 35 years, then again to 30 years.

A number of other measures have been taken to ensure that fixed mortgage rates are sustainable and achievable. We are going to continue to take care of Canadians in the housing market area. We are going to have some significant oversight thanks to this bill.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too was at the committee meeting and I saw the NDP vote for the bill. I thought the NDP members were reassured when they heard the imperative reasons for the increase to \$300 from \$250. They also heard that the legislation would create transparency.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance talk about the imperative of moving forward quickly in terms of allowing Canadians to have options?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: It is imperative, Mr. Speaker. This is an urgent matter because the finance minister and this government need to have the ability to take immediate action should we find ourselves in any kind of a situation where a recession is again a risk.

There are countries around the world that are at risk, and we just need to look at some of the European countries, like Greece. We must be prepared for any kind of a downturn in the world that might affect us. That is why it is urgent. We must ensure the housing market has some oversight. Without this legislation, we cannot do that.

I would implore members of the House to consider that. I would implore the NDP members to again vote for the bill as they did in committee to ensure the housing market is protected.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-3, the budget implementation bill.

Government Orders

The government has actually not made the case as to why it is rushing the bill through this House, particularly regarding part 11 on shared services and part 7 on residential mortgages.

On the shared services issue, during my tenure as the former minister of public works, I led the way forward for reform of the Department of Public Works. At that time we were in times of very significant surplus. I recognized the importance of always respecting every hard-earned tax dollar we received from Canadians during good times and bad time, in surplus and deficit, and ensuring that we delivered the best possible services to Canadians, and got the best value for tax dollars received.

That is why we in the Paul Martin government engaged in a very extensive expenditure review process. We had an expenditure review committee of cabinet. I was part of that committee. Without reducing services to Canadians, we were able to find billions of dollars in savings within the Government of Canada.

Within the Department of Public Works alone, we were able to identify \$3 billion over five years and a billion every year after that by reforming procurement. I remember the hon. Walt Lastewka, who was the parliamentary secretary to public works and the former member of Parliament for St. Catharines, helped lead that. He brought his experience as a procurement expert from General Motors to the department and helped lead some of those reforms.

We were reforming the way we managed our real estate. We used efficiencies, including outsourcing certain types of services to get better value and provide better services to our tenants, which were government departments. We were modernizing all the procurement and real estate services in a way that ultimately saved billions of dollars without reducing services. We did it by working with the public servants.

I remember the day after I was sworn in as minister, as we were going through some of these proposals and ideas, we made a decision very quickly to engage the 14,000 public servants in a discussion about the plans to modernize the department. We did not hide our plans to reduce costs and to get better value for taxpayers. We did not hide those plans from the public service. We decided to engage the public service fully.

In fact, I did town hall meetings across Canada with 1,400 people coming out to a town hall meeting in Gatineau to 400 in Halifax. We engaged public servants at the grassroots. We engaged them not simply as union members but as citizens, as taxpayers, as public servants who were drawn to the public service with a desire to serve Canadians, to do a good job and to make a difference.

What we see with the government is a lack of respect for the public service as it takes an adversarial approach to these kinds of initiatives. There is secrecy wherein it does not share some of its plans to modernize government and save costs to get better value for taxpayers. I do not think there is anybody in this House who would disagree with the idea that there are ways to get better value for taxpayers.

Our quarrel with the government is with its lack of respect for the public service and its inability, incapacity, or refusal to actually work with the public service to get those better results.

We are accustomed to this kind of approach as a Parliament. The government treats Parliament as a rubber stamp. It does not provide Parliament with the facts and the costs required for Parliament to do its work.

If we look at the way the government approaches Parliament and the way it approaches the public service, it brings back memories of the Mike Harris government.

The finance minister, the foreign affairs minister, and the President of the Treasury Board were all members of the Mike Harris government and they picked fights—

Hon. John Baird: Did you ever campaign for Mike Harris?

Hon. Scott Brison: No, in fact, Mr. Speaker. I have never campaigned for Mike Harris.

Hon. Bob Rae: Neither have I.

Hon. Scott Brison: Neither has my leader. I can say that unequivocally.

• (1535)

During that time, they picked gratuitous fights with unions. They caused countless strikes and disruptions to government services. They left the public without services, as schools shut down and government offices closed. They really made labour relations toxic throughout the public service.

There is a need, obviously, from time to time, for a government to disagree with the unions leading the public service. However, there is an opportunity at all times to work with the public service and get better results.

Again, in this budget and Bill C-3 and part seven of it, we see a refusal of the government to share with this Parliament and the public service its plans to reduce expenditures. Either the government does not have a plan or it is hiding the plan from Canadians. We know that when it comes to Consulting and Audit Canada, the government hid its plan during the election to eliminate much of the audit capacity of the federal government. Again, this is consistent with a government of secrecy that does not want Canadians to have the facts, that does not want scrutiny by legitimate audit functions within government. This is not a cost-cutting measure but an ideological measure designed to try to shut down anyone who asks legitimate questions of the government and to try to continue to hide the truth from Canadians.

I would like to speak to the residential mortgages issue.

The parliamentary secretary, a few minutes ago, commended the Minister of Finance for his prescience in eliminating 40-year mortgages with no down payments. She neglected to tell the House that it was that minister who, just a few years before that, had introduced in his first budget 40-year mortgages with no down payments.

Hon. Bob Rae: Oops.

Hon. Scott Brison: Oops.

Government Orders

The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that it was tremendously irresponsible for the Minister of Finance to introduce 40-year mortgages with no down payments in his first budget in 2006.

The Liberal opposition raised repeatedly, day after day in this House, the housing bubble, a bubble that was mentioned earlier by Mark Carney, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, in reports, including an extensive report in *The Economist* magazine a few months ago that cited the housing bubble in Canada. When we raised questions to that effect, the Minister of Finance, the government, continually rejected our assertion that this was a problem that needed corrective action.

The reality is that it is not just a housing bubble but a personal debt bubble that we have in Canada. The average Canadian family owes \$1.50 for every dollar of annual income.

Again, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, Mark Carney, has described housing as “severely unaffordable” and that we must remain vigilant against an upcoming correction.

Under the previous Liberal government, mortgage rules were prudent. There were 25-year mortgages with 5% down payment required. That was changed under the current government to 40-year mortgages with no downpayment. Then it reduced them to 35 years with a 5% downpayment, and then 30-year mortgages. We hope that the Minister of Finance will soon get back to the prudent Liberal policy of 25-year mortgage amortizations.

The government is now asking us to take on more risk, effectively. The CMHC limit was \$350 billion in 2008 and that has been raised to \$600 billion. Ultimately, we recognize that there could be a strong argument made for raising the limit. However, this is a very significant public policy matter. It deserves more debate than what is being afforded in this budget discussion. We should have an informed vote on it and, frankly, part seven should be introduced as a separate bill and be studied very carefully.

These are important issues, if we consider the level of debt Canadians have and the importance of real estate as the principal asset that many Canadian families rely on for their income and financial security in their retirement. I think there is a strong argument to be made that part seven should be a separate piece of legislation and be afforded more diligence in this Parliament.

● (1545)

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member that he does not need to tell us again that he was a minister of public works. I think he mentioned it six or seven times. We all know that when the Liberal Party actually had more than 30 members in the House and was in government some time ago, he was a minister. I wanted to let him know that.

In relation to part 7 and part 11, shared services in particular, he mentioned that we were keeping these secret. I just want to let the member know that if he read the budget implementation act, they are mentioned there. The secret has been published. It is no longer a secret.

What is not a secret is that most Canadians would be shocked to find out that up to this point, many government departments could

not share services between each other. They did not have the ability to do so.

This government, in looking at ways not to cut jobs but actually to save money for taxpayers, is looking at ways like that of sharing services.

In mentioning the prudent Liberal policy, is this particular member talking about the policy where they cut \$25 billion from the most needy people in Canada, including from hospitals, schools and the elderly? Is that the policy he is talking about as so prudent?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, the member has a business background, which is commendable. He refers to that sometimes. I was referring to my background and experience as a minister of public works who actually helped lead the shared services initiative within the Government of Canada.

I dare say, although I recognize it is quite a long ways from where my priority is right now to being back in government, I think there is a strong argument to be made, and some would say, I have a better chance of being in a cabinet than the hon. member.

I would say, from having led shared services initiatives, it should not be just—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. It is very difficult for hon. members to hear the questions and comments when there is so much noise.

Questions and comments.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just want to clarify for the record that at the committee, when members vote to bring a committee report to the House, they do not necessarily vote in favour of or in opposition to the budget. They are simply voting to report it, which is what was done yesterday.

The opposition was very clear at the meeting regarding our concern about the changes being proposed to the insurance aspect of CMHC and the bringing in of American companies.

My question for the member for Kings—Hants is about the CMHC delivering \$12 billion in tax revenue directly to the coffers of Canada, money that it has obtained from its operations. Why in the world would the government want to give that to American companies to send back to the U.S.?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I do not have a philosophical problem with using private sector resources and initiatives, and capital in some cases, to provide public services with good sound regulation.

We have to look at every one of these cases separately. There are cases of outsourcing that can make sense and deliver good services for Canadians in conjunction with the public service, and there are some that do not make sense.

Government Orders

The unfortunate thing is that by lumping this provision into this budget and not providing us with adequate opportunities to study it, we cannot determine whether it makes sense in this case. I think we would agree that it requires greater study and, as such, a separate piece of legislation. Given the importance of this, I think it would make a lot of sense.

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at committee the party of the member from Kings—Hants voted in favour of Bill C-3. Notwithstanding his remarks here today, does the member intend to vote in favour of the bill in the House?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, we are studying this piece of legislation. We will determine our support at the appropriate time.

However, it is clear that both in the House and at committee, through the legislative processes, we will make a determination at every level. We take our role as parliamentarians seriously and are studying the bill. We are also asking the right questions. I think that is key, both at committee and in the House, to be asking these questions and raising important issues.

I would urge the hon. member, as a member of that caucus, to raise those questions as well. He has a role not just to do what the government is telling him to do but also to dig in and ask those questions. I am certain he will. I certainly hope so.

● (1550)

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to rise today to speak to the budget, which is currently being discussed by my colleagues on both sides of the House.

[English]

I would like to take the liberty of putting this new budget into context, so that its vision of where we are heading becomes clearer.

Many members of the House have spoken in the chamber about the budget. One unique perspective I would like to add is how the budget reflects the specific needs of communities, such as the one I have the honour to represent.

On that note, I would like to thank the constituents of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, commonly known as the most beautiful place on earth, for honouring me with the privilege of serving them a second time.

I also want to thank local leaders, including the mayors, the MLAs, the first nations chiefs and others who have worked so closely with me to generate the results achieved under the first phase of the economic action plan, which concentrated on economic stimulus and prepared the groundwork for the phase we are now debating in the House, the low tax plan for jobs and growth.

Together, we showed in the first phase of the economic action plan that we can achieve anything as a community. We Canadians are diverse, industrious and entrepreneurial, and the people I represent showed skills of communication and collaboration that allowed us together to initiate and complete over 120 projects under the first phase of the economic action plan.

The member for Burnaby—New Westminster said earlier today in question period that he yearned for open, transparent and honest public consultation. That is what we saw in the first phase of the economic action plan.

Time after time, we saw the magic of priorities driven by each local community in the riding I represent, including Squamish, Whistler, the Sunshine Coast, Powell River, West Vancouver, North Vancouver, Bowen Island and Lions Bay. The steps to strengthen cultural identity, develop critical infrastructure and invest in the health and safety of all of our communities were steps that we saw adroitly taken. Most important, we created jobs, including many of the 560,000 new jobs created under Canada's economic action plan since July 2009.

This is a plan that has put our country atop the world for our economic recovery. Why? Because our government worked closely with each local community.

What did we achieve in Squamish? We achieved support for the West Coast Railway Museum, for small craft harbours, for sewer and water main upgrades, for biking and hiking trails and for seniors' housing units.

What did we achieve in Whistler? We achieved support for the World Ski and Snowboard Festival and for Whistler Crankworx, the great biking festival; for the Whistler Public Library; for the arts council; for the Whistler Centre for Sustainability and for upgrades to Highway 99.

What did we achieve on the Sunshine Coast? Support for the pulp and paper industry, for public transit lines, for an improved Pender Harbour authority, for fitness centres, aquatic centres and highway improvements.

What did we achieve in Powell River? Support for the pulp and paper industry yet again, green energy hydro projects, harbour upgrades, water system upgrades and for sports facilities.

What did we achieve for the North Shore, for West and North Vancouver? We achieved a replacement of the ageing Blue Bridge; the provision of new bus lanes, which we commissioned only last weekend; upgrades to water and sewage facilities; a new artificial turf field, a spirit trail and other community amenities.

The magic that applies to all of these projects is not only that they generated jobs and stimulated the economy, but even more important that they came about as priorities generated by each community, borne of close communication and collaboration among all levels of government.

As we contemplate the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, the budget before us, Canadians are pleased to see once again their priorities reflected in the budget.

Uniformly, during the election campaign and throughout my first term in office, I heard members of my communities articulate three economic priorities for our government: first, to increase jobs; second, to support those in our communities who needed it most; and third, to respect our environment and, in doing so, drive the economy. I am proud to say that the low tax plan for jobs and growth embraces all of these priorities.

First, the budget before us will create more jobs. Notable is the hiring credit, which this year will encourage our ridings' many small business owners to hire new employees and small business people across the country to do the same. On the international scene, our government continues to invest in the most successful Asia-Pacific Gateway project.

● (1555)

Second, our government is committed to supporting those in our communities who need it most. For our ridings' eligible seniors, starting in 2012 the low tax plan for jobs and growth will offer an annual benefit of \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples above what is currently offered.

For families with disabled family members, our government introduced and strengthened the registered disability savings plan. For our ridings' many students, our government plans this year to strengthen RESPs. We also plan to improve the Canada student grants program and the textbook tax credit. Our government will furthermore exempt scholarship and bursary income from students' taxable incomes, saving students thousands of dollars each year.

For families with children, programs, such as the universal child care benefit introduced in 2006, continue to offer greater choice in care by providing \$100 per month for each child under six years old. I am particularly proud that our government has established a 15% volunteer firefighter tax credit, a measure for which I advocated on behalf of firefighters in our ridings. This credit will support the heroic men and women who voluntarily put themselves in harm's way to save the lives of friends and neighbours.

Third, our government is paving the way in making environmental sustainability a hallmark of our economic growth. The 2009 economic action plan provided \$1 billion through the pulp and paper green transformation program, which assisted local employers in the riding I represent, such as those in Powell River and on the Sunshine Coast.

This year our government will build on that investment in our low tax plan for jobs and growth by contributing a further \$97 million over two years for research and development of cleaner energy technologies. Such initiatives promise to help the people of our riding responsibly to enjoy the abundance for which we Canadians are famous.

These are concrete plans every Canadian can understand. We are on track, reflecting their priorities using taxpayers' dollars responsibly, creating jobs, helping people who most need the help and ensuring we act as efficient stewards of our most wonderful environment.

We are doing all of this without increasing taxes or cutting social services. We are doing all of this while wrestling the deficit to zero by 2014. We are doing all of this as a community. We, in West

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Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, join together with all Canadians proving time and again that no good thing is impossible. We are doing all of these things together. Our government is serving Canadians for today, for tomorrow and for future generations.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my Conservative friend talked about a concrete plan. I want to talk about the chunks of concrete that are falling off Canadian bridges. Just yesterday afternoon, basketball-sized chunks of concrete fell from the Gardiner Expressway in Toronto. A few months ago, chunks of concrete fell from the Mercier Bridge and the Champlain Bridge in Montreal.

I do not see any funds in the budget to build a new Champlain Bridge, to help repair our aging infrastructure and to help municipalities ensure their bridges remain safe, which is why we are not supporting this budget.

Precisely what is there in this budget for keeping bridges safe?

● (1600)

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina for her question.

[English]

I am delighted to work with her in the House to promote health and fitness and other things that we collaborate on.

It is quite exciting to see her new-found interest in promoting infrastructure, because it was infrastructure that was so heavily promoted in our economic action plan. We saw bridges and infrastructure being improved across Canada, projects that promoted jobs where local priorities were reflected in a national budget. Many of the projects are just now being completed.

It is wonderful to see that she is on board with that and I hope she will, therefore, support the second phase of Canada's economic action plan.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. I have to differ with him initially, of course, in pointing out that Saanich—Gulf Islands is the most beautiful riding in Canada.

The member's speech focused on the budget but, as I understand it now, we are discussing Bill C-3, a budget implementation bill, a very narrow application of 12 specific measures to which I have no objection. Could he expand on why this budget implementation bill does not actually mention the major measures in the budget?

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Mr. John Weston: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my neighbour from a very beautiful riding to be sure.

What we have been discussing for the last few days, which is of interest to all Canadians, is the budget, which responds to the priorities of all Canadians. The budget implementation bill is the bridge to get us from where we are to where we will hopefully be next week, which is well on our way to implementing phase two of Canada's economic action plan, knowing that phase one has brought our country to number one in the world in its economic recovery.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the constituents of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country for sending someone, for whom I have a very high regard, to this House. I cannot think of any better member, more hard-working, more intelligent or more serious.

My colleague gave us a very good description of a lot of the infrastructure investments that were made in phase one and, indeed, those have been made in my riding of Kitchener Centre with aquatic facilities and so on.

In Kitchener Centre, my constituents are very much aware that we now have to put the brakes on. We cannot go on with big spending policies. We need to pay down the deficit. I wonder if my colleague has had similar discussions with the people of his riding.

Mr. John Weston: That is an excellent question, Mr. Speaker, because it touches on the philosophical question that we all have to deal with as members of Parliament. We would love to do more for our constituents. We would love it if our budget offered more money but we need to be responsible stewards for our economy and for the environment.

The budget aims to bring the deficit to zero by 2014. That is responsible government. That will keep us in the number one position in the world, which we are so grateful to occupy today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take advantage of the fact that this is the first time I am rising in the House, apart from question period, to say hello and to thank the people of Brossard—La Prairie for giving me the honour and privilege of representing them here in Ottawa as their member of Parliament. I would especially like to thank my family and friends, who have always believed in me and helped me achieve my dream. I would also like to apologize, as head coach of the U10 soccer team in Brossard, for not being present more often, as the players learn to win and lose and, more importantly, to have fun as a team.

[*English*]

I wish to add a few words of thanks to the constituents of my riding of Brossard—La Prairie and to let them know that I will work as hard as I can to ensure their voices are being heard and their concerns are being addressed here in Ottawa.

● (1605)

[*Translation*]

With part 7 of Bill C-3, the government seeks to take Canadians' money, money that would normally be used to reduce Canada's annual budget deficit, and give it to private financial institutions, most of which distribute their profits to American banks. In addition,

the government wants to raise Canadians' liability to \$300 billion in order to guarantee the activities of private financial institutions.

In a 2008 Library of Parliament publication, Philippe Bergevin, of the International Affairs, Trade and Finance Division, said clearly that the global financial crisis was triggered by difficulties in the housing market in the United States. Many financial institutions in the United States and elsewhere in the world were hard hit by the mortgage crisis and had to declare bankruptcy or seek government assistance.

Fortunately, Canada made it through better than our neighbours to the south, mainly because its banking system is one of the best regulated and soundest in the world. Unlike American banks, Canadian banks were less active in the securitization of the high-risk loans which were at the centre of the 2002 financial crisis.

By supporting and guaranteeing the activities of American banks, the government is raising Canadians' liability to \$300 billion. The government is not content to give tax cuts to banks that are making billions in profits, it also wants to take Canadians' money and give it to private financial institutions. That is why we have proposed amendments.

[*English*]

With Bill C-3 and part 7 on mortgage insurance, the government is simply taking money away from Canadians, which could be used to reduce Canada's annual deficit, and is giving it away to foreign private financial institutions, which at the moment are U.S. private mortgage insurance giants that take that money and give it away as profits to their shareholders.

That is not all. It is not enough to take money away from Canadians. The government also wants the Canadian taxpayer to guarantee in case those private financial institutions do not make enough profits and go belly-up. The government wants to increase Canada's liability to \$300 billion. The government wants to take money away from the Canadian taxpayer.

According to yesterday's report by Karen Kinsley, president and chief executive officer of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC, it is in the business of providing mortgage loan insurance. It operates its mortgage insurance business on a commercial basis at no cost to taxpayers. All income generated by CMHC's mortgage insurance activity goes directly to the Government of Canada and serves to reduce the government's annual deficit. Over the past decade, CMHC has helped reduce Canada's accumulated deficit by \$12.3 billion through paid income taxes and residual net income. The vast majority of that money was the result of CMHC's mortgage insurance loan operations.

There are some fundamental differences between CMHC and private insurers. CMHC has a public mandate to provide mortgage loan insurance to qualified borrowers in all parts of the country and for all forms of housing. CMHC is the only mortgage insurer for large multi-unit rental properties and nursing and retirement homes. As well, a significant percentage of the insured high ratio homeowner loans is in rural areas and smaller communities that are traditionally not as well served by private insurers. Together, these areas made up to close to 44% of CMHC's business in 2010.

Private sector insurers, on the other hand, have the ability to not serve those areas of the country or housing forms they deem less profitable.

The government not only intends to take money away from the Canadian taxpayer and give it to private mortgage insurers, but it wants to guarantee financial institutions that were involved in the sub-prime debacle and the global financial crisis.

Our point is that there is no need to involve private insurers, and there are significant risks in doing so. Why would we put the delivery of such important social goods at risk needlessly?

CMHC will be in competition with private insurers, which means more money spent on promotion and advertising of services by all players, money that should be going to house more Canadians.

• (1610)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his first speech in the House of Commons. It was well done. However, I do take issue with a couple of things that were said and I would ask for his opinion.

When we were in committee yesterday, it came to light that this section within the BIA would allow more transparency. There are provisions that would require information to be kept and shared, not only with the minister but also with OSFI.

Based on the fact that the NDP members perpetuate that they believe in transparency, that the public ought to know the things that are going on in government, how does the member justify voting against this provision when it would make the present system more transparent? It would not hide private contracts as it presently does. It would make them open to the public's eye. I would ask him to explain that contradiction.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, we want to amend the provisions to ensure that money is not being taken away from Canadians and that it would actually help CMHC and help pay off the annual deficit.

What is being provided right now would not help Canadians. It would actually make it more competitive and more difficult. It would also take away money that could be used to reimburse the deficit.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on an excellent presentation. The depth of knowledge that he has demonstrated on this particular issue is really quite profound.

As an old municipal politician, though, I always like to go to budgetary revenues. I have often heard the Conservatives say that this is a low-tax plan, yet when we take a look at the plan in its

entirety up to 2016, we see that with regard to personal income tax the government is expecting to take out of the system an extra 50%. It raised \$100 billion last year in personal income tax and in 2016 it is looking at \$151 billion, an increase of 50% over five or six years.

I know the rate of GDP and the rate of growth in the workforce. How does this translate into low taxes when we see the \$50 billion increase that is being projected over six years?

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, we are taking money away from Canadians, money that should be used for paying down the deficit. The government right now is not helping. It is spending a tremendous amount of money on projects that we do not currently need. What we should try to do is use the money to pay back Canadians instead of giving it away to foreign companies.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate my colleague on his first speech in the House. I look forward to working with him on the finance committee in the months and years to come.

We heard very clearly from officials that people who want a mortgage and do not have more than 20% as a down payment, they have to have insurance on their mortgage. Therefore, if we want people to have the ability to buy houses in this country, there has to be insurance to backstop them. In this case, the Canadian government is actually making money from that process.

We have had a system in place with both private insurers and CMHC working to fill that need in the marketplace. I would like the member to address why that is actually a really good system and why it would be very difficult if we were not able to do that to enable people to buy homes.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, again the idea is to have CMHC, which is doing a fine job in providing insurance so people can buy houses. We do not need additional players, especially foreign players that the government is supporting. We do not need that. What we have currently is sufficient.

• (1615)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the first time I rose I was delivering an SO 31. It entailed all of the minute that I had before me so I did not get the opportunity to thank the people of Chatham-Kent—Essex, the wonderful riding that I represent, for putting their trust in me these past five and a half years and returning me back to this honourable position. I want to also thank all those who worked so hard to get me re-elected. I want to take this time, too, to thank my family and especially my beautiful wife, Faye, for her love and support these past 36 years. We just celebrated 36 years of marriage and it just keeps getting better with eight beautiful children and those twenty-three beautiful grandchildren that our children have given us as well.

I say with respect as well that the reason I feel I am here is to serve the people of Chatham-Kent—Essex but also, to ensure our children and our grandchildren can still share the bounty and the blessings that this wonderful land has given us.

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That is why I am here and I am pleased to rise and speak to the budget. On June 6, our Conservative government introduced budget 2011, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low-tax plan for jobs and growth, in the House of Commons. While Canada has out-performed, and continues to out-perform most other G7 countries economically, there is still a great deal of uncertainty within the global economy in the fragile global recovery.

As we all know, Canada is not an island. We will be impacted by global economic storms. That is why we need to remain focused, singularly, on the economy and jobs and building on Canada's economic action plan.

To date, our plan and tax-cutting agenda introduced in 2009, have proven extremely invaluable in helping protect and grow Canada's economy. Indeed, Canada has seen over 560,000 net new jobs since July 2009. Even better, Canada has also seen seven straight positive quarters of economic growth. Canada's economic record in recent years has also attracted a fair amount of attention, praise and even a little envy from outside our borders. Only last week, an op-ed in *The Washington Times* declared:

It's hard to find good economic news anywhere in the West...Yet there is one country where the unemployment rate actually fell last month: Canada. Its 7.4 percent unemployment rate reflects huge private-sector job gains consolidated over the past year...Today, despite the global downturn, Canada has an economy that is creating jobs, with a government that is not crowding out private investment as it borrows to finance its own spending, and a social security system that is fully solvent. The lesson is clear...Tax cuts work. They can make the economy grow, they can create jobs...It's time to try something that has actually worked.

Listen to the last line: "It's time for America to be more like Canada".

However, our Conservative government understands that Canada cannot afford to be complacent. We cannot rest on our laurels. Indeed, with still too many Canadians looking for work and the global economic recovery still fragile, we cannot afford to be focused on anything else but the economy. That is why we need to stay the course, remain focused on the economy and implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. We are doing just that with the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act. This act would implement many key and positive provisions of budget 2011.

I would like to mention some examples now. To begin with, to help seniors, the bill would enhance the guaranteed income supplement, GIS, for seniors who may be at risk of experiencing financial difficulties. This measure will provide a new top-up benefit to more than 680,000 seniors across Canada. This means up to \$600 per year for single seniors and \$840 per year for couples.

● (1620)

Another measure within today's bill assists many provinces during the fragile economic recovery by extending the temporary total transfer protection to 2011-12, representing nearly \$1 billion in support to affected provinces like Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Manitoba. This would support provincial front line delivery of health care and social programs that families depend on.

We also recognize the importance of entrepreneurship and our youth across this great country as within the act is a measure to

encourage young entrepreneurs by providing \$20 million to help the Canadian Youth Business Foundation.

Sticking to the theme of helping our youth and supporting Canadians, I will also mention another measure in the act that sets out to enhance federal assistance for part-time students. This is accomplished by making education more accessible by reducing the in-study interest rate for part-time students to zero, bringing them in line with full-time students.

I have mentioned how we are helping Canada's most vulnerable seniors. We are supporting provinces during the fragile economic recovery. We are supporting entrepreneurship in our youth. I would also mention how we are assisting students. These measures alone are enough good reasons to support this bill. Despite all of the outstanding measures raised above that will undoubtedly have positive effects on Canadians facing real life issues, there is more.

With today's bill we are also helping the disabled by strong improvements to the registered disability savings plan, or RDSP, by increasing flexibility to assist RDSP assets to beneficiaries with shortened life expectancies and ensuring that individuals can appeal in every case a determination concerning their eligibility for the disability tax credit.

The bill also works to support our brave veterans who have given so much to Canada by providing sales tax relief to the Royal Canadian Legion for their purchases of Remembrance Day poppies and wreaths.

We are also maintaining Canada's leadership in genomics research by providing \$65 million for Genome Canada to launch a new competition in the area of human health and sustaining the operating costs to Genome Canada and genome centres.

One last measure I would like to mention is the bill's provision to protect most Canadian housing markets with new measures to reinforce the stability of Canada's housing finance system by strengthening the government's oversight of the mortgage insurance industry. I should note that respected public policy commentator, Finn Poschmann of the C.D. Howe Institute, appeared at the finance committee. He was there along with some of my colleagues the other day to applaud this portion of the bill. He also wrote a lengthy article about it in the *Financial Post* that I encourage everyone to read, where he labelled it, "a deft move".

I will quote portions of it:

—even though it does little more than formalize existing arrangements. The legislation says that the private insurers must set aside adequate capital, and to do so as specified by the Superintendent of Financial Institutions. In other words, sound, prudential oversight remains a requirement, and we will have transparency and risk disclosure that is as good as we can manage.

It refers to the act explicitly and says that the finance minister may demand immediate access to any records relevant to CMHC's activities and make them public, something he says is:

—a big step toward transparency and disclosure—and an important one to the Canadian public—

Clearly, this is a positive and important bill, especially for our seniors. Seniors have worked tirelessly to afford us what we have today, a beautiful country to call our own, a country that is recognized around the world as a truly remarkable place to live. Now it is time to give back to Canada's seniors who are in the most vulnerable positions. I am confident that all members in this House will agree.

Canada's most vulnerable seniors are counting on the GIS top-up to come into effect on July 4, as promised. Let us make that happen.

• (1625)

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member about the mortgage insurance section of the bill, given that it is by far the largest section of the budget implementation act.

Why does he think it is good public policy for the Canadian taxpayers to assume the risk, through public dollars to the tune of \$300 billion, for the mortgage insurance undertaken by the private sector? Should these companies not just pay premiums and assume their own risk for the mortgages that they insure?

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I serve on the finance committee and we have talked about this at quite some length.

Although we have a good regulation and a good body that administers this through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, we, on the government side, and think it was evident with some of the witnesses as well, believe it is important that we also have some competition.

At this stage of the game, we want that to continue and to grow. We believe this is an important part of the direction that we need to go with our country to improve the mortgage situation as we know it today.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to seniors at the beginning of his speech. Earlier this morning I talked to some department officials at the provincial level from the province of Manitoba. I was inquiring about the 55-plus program that supplements seniors. They indicated that in order to meet the threshold to receive that provincial subsidy, a senior would have to receive \$9,746, and that would be on an annual basis. That is after we factor in the GIS, the old age pension and so forth.

Does the member not recognize the situation in which seniors are in a very real way? Does he believe his government will go into the next budget where it will continue to increase the support in terms of the GIS going forward?

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Yes, Mr. Speaker, this government is very serious about our seniors and has demonstrated that in past budgets.

I believe the hon. member is referring to the guaranteed income supplement, or the GIS. The top up we will be providing will benefit 680,000 seniors across Canada. This means, and I repeat what I said in my speech, \$600 per year for single seniors and another \$840 per year for couples.

Mr. Ted Opatz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is also my first opportunity to thank the people of Etobicoke Centre for

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electing me to this great chamber. I am honoured by their confidence and grateful for the opportunity to serve. I thank my wife Cynthia, my family, my parents, my volunteers, my friends and my regiment, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, of which I am now the former commander, for their support.

I understand that the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act includes key measures to enhance federal assistance for part-time students. Specifically, it would reduce the in-study interest rate for part-time students to zero, bringing them in line with full-time students. This was one of the many important measures in budget 2011 to help students.

Could the member speak to those measures in budget 2011? What was the reaction of students to those measures?

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Mr. Speaker, the budget has some exciting measures for students: student loan forgiveness for doctors and nurses working in rural and remote areas; extending tax relief for skills certificate exams; doubling the in-study income exemption from \$50 per week to \$100 per week, benefiting over 100,000 students; increasing the family income threshold for part-time Canada student loan and Canada student grant recipients; and bringing the eligibility thresholds in line with the thresholds used for full-time students. There is much more. The College Student Alliance says that this shows commitment to supporting post-secondary education.

This budget definitely thinks about our students.

• (1630)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we resume debate, I will let the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek know that I will need to interrupt his speech part way through, at 4:35 p.m.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that notice. I will try to adjust my comments appropriately.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-3 and the concerns the NDP has with one particular section. Repeatedly in the House, there has been discussion about the fact that at the finance committee, the NDP the position was to vote for the bill, but what we voted for was to bring it forward as a report from the committee.

We had expressed our concerns yesterday about a particular portion of the bill and today that led our critic to move amendments to the bill. The reason this has been done is we think it should be withdrawn from Bill C-3 to give it the appropriate study.

The section we are talking about would open the door for private mortgage insurance companies to enter the market. In fairness, there have already been two private companies offering mortgage insurance in Canada, under special arrangements. However, this legislation would now codify their position in the Canadian market.

Canada has had a public insurer, CMHC, operating here with liabilities 100% guaranteed by the federal government. The other private insurers have only 90% of their liabilities guaranteed.

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According to the C.D. Howe Institute, and I do not quote it very often, the 10% difference represents an appropriate fee with the risk. However, who decides what the risk factor really is?

During the housing meltdown in the United States, insurance was clearly not covered adequately. Therefore, who decided what the fees were for that risk? The American experience has proven private sector risk assessment does not have a very good record at all.

Clearly, mortgage insurance makes housing more accessible by increasing the availability of capital for housing. Obviously, when the money is protected and guaranteed, it makes perfect sense.

The NDP believes there is no good reason to involve more private insurers, and after what took place in the United States, it proves there is a significant risk to Canadians in doing so. Why would Canadians want their government to put the delivery of such an important social good at risk needlessly?

Again, we need to study this further. We need to consider the amendments that are about to be put to the House and for the government to take the responsible position and withdraw the clauses. We should work together, have hearings and really consider the potential impact of this.

Karen Kinsley, CEO of CMHC, stated that competition with private insurance meant more money spent in promotion and advertising of services of all players, and that would now include CMHC. That money should go toward housing Canadians. To have an Americanization, for lack of a better term, of a service that has been provided to Canadians in a very valuable way, in fact, in a way that has produced revenue in terms of \$12 billion to the government, we very clearly should pause and take the time to look at this appropriately. Maybe we will reach the same conclusions. I doubt that, but at least we should look at it in a fair-minded way.

There are very good people who helped create the U.S. housing bubble. Their intention was probably was good in the beginning. However, the global financial crash came about because people were provided the option of money they could not afford. It was not appropriate and the risks were just not assessed properly.

● (1635)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 4:35 p.m., pursuant to an order made Wednesday, June 15, 2011, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the bill now before the House.

[English]

The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2 to 7.

[Translation]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

● (1700)

[English]

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 8)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothé	Boivin
Borg	Boulterrice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brisson	Brousseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dianne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré-Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Étobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dussault
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogan
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassim	Ito
Hughes	Iyer
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
Layton	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathyssen	May
McCallum	McGuinity
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclit	Perreault

Pilon	Quach
Rae	Rafferty
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Sandhu	Savoie
Scarpaleggia	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibault	Tsune
Tremblay	Trudeau
Turnel	Valenote — 134

NAYS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Bellavance	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinoooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Fortin	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Norlock
Nicholson	O'Neill Gordon
O'Connor	Oda
Obhrai	Opitz
Oliver	Poillevre
Payne	Raitt
Preston	Rathgeber
Rajotte	Rempel
Reid	Richardson
Richards	Saxton
Rickford	Seeback
Schellenberger	Shipley
Shea	Smith
Shory	Sorenson
Sopuck	

Government Orders

Stanton	Storeth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trotter	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 157	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 defeated. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 2 to 7 defeated.

● (1705)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yeay.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (1710)

(The House divided on the motion which was agreed on the following division:)

(Division No. 9)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Bellavance	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinoooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Fortin	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen

Government Orders

Goldring	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hickert	Hillyer
Hoback	Hooppner
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lumney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
May	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Oliver
Opitz	Payne
Poulièvre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seebach	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorcnson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trotter
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	Wilks
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Williamson	Young (Oakville)
Woodworth	Zimmer— 158
Young (Vancouver South)	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Belanger
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulence
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brison	Brosscau
Byrne	Caron
Cassey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Duscault
Easter	Eyking
Footc	Freeman
Fry	Gameau
Garrison	Genest

Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogulic
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
Layton	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McQuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagoi)
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Pislet
Perrault	Pilon
Quach	Rac
Rafferty	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Sandhu
Savoie	Scarpaleggia
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	St-Denis
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Stoffler
Sitsabaesan	Thibeault
Stewart	Tremblay
Sullivan	Turner
Toone	
Trudeau	
Valeriote— 133	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Jim Flaherty moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, June 15, 2011, the next question is on the motion at third reading of Bill C-3.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, I believe you would find agreement to apply the vote from the previous motion to this motion, with the Conservatives voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, NDP members will be voting no.

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, Liberal members will be voting against.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois are in favour of the motion.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I will be voting in the same way as in the previous motion, yes.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 10)		Government Orders	
YEAS		Woodworth Young (Vancouver South)	Young (Oakville) Zimmer — 158
Members			NAYS
			Members
Adams	Adler	Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Aglukkaq	Albas	Angus	Ashton
Albrecht	Alexander	Atamanenko	Aubin
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison	Ayala	Bélanger
Ambley	Anders	Bennett	Benskin
Anderson	Armstrong	Bevington	Blanchette
Ashfield	Aspin	Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Baird	Bateman	Borg	Boulerice
Bellavance	Bernier	Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Bezan	Blaney	Brisson	Brossseau
Block	Boughen	Byrne	Caron
Braid	Breitkreuz	Casey	Cash
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Charlton	Chicoine
Brown (Barrie)	Brunoogoe	Chisholm	Choquette
Burr	Calandra	Chow	Christopherson
Calkins	Cannan	Cleary	Coderre
Carmichael	Carrie	Comartin	Côté
Chisu	Chong	Crowder	Cullen
Clarke	Clement	Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver East)
Daniel	Davidson	Day	Dewar
Dechert	Del Mastro	Dion	Dionne Labelle
Devolin	Dreeshen	Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra	Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Fantino	Fast	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dussault
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Easter	Eyking
Flaherty	Fletcher	Footé	Freeman
Fortin	Galipeau	Fry	Garneau
Gallant	Gill	Garrison	Genset
Glover	Goguen	Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Goldring	Gosal	Godin	Goodale
Gourde	Grewal	Gravelle	Groguhé
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Ilawn	Hayes	Hassainia	Hsu
Hiebert	Hilleyer	Hughes	Hyer
Hieback	Hoeppner	Julian	Karygiannis
Holder	James	Kellway	Lamoureux
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Lapointe	Larose
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Latendresse	Laverdière
Kerr	Komarnicki	Layton	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Lauzon	Lebel	Liu	MacAulay
Leef	Leitch	Mai	Marston
Lemieux	Leung	Martin	Masse
Lizon	Lobb	Mathyscen	McCallum
Lukiwski	Lunney	McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie	Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
May	Mayes	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
McColeman	McLeod	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Menegakis	McNzie	Mulcair	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	Nantel	Murray
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson	Nicholls	Nash
Norlock	O'Connor	Pacetti	Nunez-Melo
O'Neill Gordon	Ohrai	Patri	Péclot
Oda	Oliver	Perreault	Pilon
Opitz	Payne	Quach	Rac
Poilevre	Preston	Rafferty	Ravignat
Raitt	Rajotte	Raynault	Regan
Rathgeber	Reid	Rousseau	Sandhu
Rempel	Richards	Savoie	Scarpaleggia
Richardson	Rickford	Sellah	Sgro
Saxton	Schellenberger	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Seeback	Shea	Sims (Newton—North Delta)	St-Denis
Shipley	Shory	Sitsabaican	Stoffer
Smith	Sopuck	Stewart	Thibeault
Sorenson	Stanton	Sullivan	Tremblay
Storseth	Strahl	Toone	Turnel
Sweet	Tison	Trudeau	
Toet	Toews	Valeriote — 133	
Trost	Trotter		
Truppe	Tweed		
Uppal	Valcourt		
Van Kesteren	Van Loan		
Vellacott	Wallace		
Warawa	Warkentin		
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to		
Sky Country)	Wilks		
Weston (Saint John)	Wong		
Williamson			

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Business of Supply

(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

● (1715)

*[Translation]***BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—POVERTY OF SENIORS

The House resumed from June 20 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to the order made on Monday, June 20, 2011, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred division on the motion relating to the business of supply.

● (1720)

[English]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*(Division No. 11)***YEAS**

Members

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Welland)
Allison
Anders
Andrews
Armstrong
Ashton
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bateman
Bellavance
Benskin
Bevington
Blanchette
Blaney
Boivin
Boughen
Boutin-Sweet
Braid
Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calandra
Cannan
Caron
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Chong
Chow
Clarke
Clement
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Davidson
Day
DeL Mastro
Dewar
Dionne-Labelle
Doré-Lefebvre
Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duscault
Easter
Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anderson
Angus
Ashfield
Aspin
Aubin
Baird
Bélanger
Bennett
Bernier
Bezan
Blanchette-Lamothé
Block
Bong
Boulterice
Brahmi
Breitkreuz
Brousseau
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Byrne
Calkins
Carmichael
Carrie
Cash
Chicome
Chisau
Choquette
Christopherson
Cleary
Coderre
Côté
Cullen
Daniel
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dechert
Devolin
Dion
Donnelly
Dreschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dykstra
Eyking
Fast
Finlay (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher

Footé
Freeman
Galipeau
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Glover
Goguen
Goodale
Gourde
Grewal
Harper
Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia
Hayes
Hilleyer
Hoepfner
Hsu
Ilyer
Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lapointe
Latendresse
Laverdière
Lebel
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leitch
Leslie
Liu
Lobb
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
Mayes
McColeman
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Menegakis
Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray
Nash
Nicholson
Nunez-Melo
O'Neill Gordon
Oda
Opitz
Papillon
Payne
Perreault
Poihièvre
Quach
Rafferty
Rajotte
Raynault
Regan
Rempel
Richardson
Rousseau
Savoie
Scarpaleggia
Seebach
Sgro
Shipley
Sims (Bonaville—Gander)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan
Spruck
St-Denis
Stewart
Storseth
Sullivan
Thibeault
Toet
Toone
Trost
Fortin
Fry
Gallant
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Gill
Godin
Goldring
Gossal
Gravelle
Grogue
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Hughes
James
Julian
Karygiannis
Kellway
Kerr
Kram (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lamoureux
Larose
Lauzon
Layton
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leaf
Lemieux
Leung
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Marston
Masse
May
McCallum
McGuinly
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Muleair
Nantel
Nicholls
Norlock
O'Connor
Oshrai
Oliver
Pacetti
Patry
Péclot
Pilon
Preston
Rac
Raitt
Rathgeber
Raynault
Reid
Richards
Rickford
Sandhu
Saxton
Schellenberger
Sellah
Shea
Shory
Trotter
Smith
Sorenson
Stanton
Stoffer
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Toews
Tremblay
Trotter

Trudeau	Truppe
Turnell	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Valcriote	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer— 291	

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My Loyalist ancestors are rolling over in their graves. This afternoon, in question period, I incorrectly referred to the Queen as “Her Royal Highness” when every schoolboy should know it is “Her Majesty”. I want to correct the record before heading home, so my loyal constituents do not toss me into Passamaquoddy Bay. God save the Queen.

The Speaker: I am sure the House appreciates the correction.

* * *

● (1725)

[English]

PREVENTING HUMAN SMUGGLERS FROM ABUSING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC) moved that Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate you on your election.

It is a great privilege for me to rise in the House today with respect to the sponsorship of Bill C-4, the preventing human smugglers from abusing Canada's immigration system act.

Over the last few months, all of us have heard a great deal about the importance of the legislation before us today, which our government first introduced October 2, 2010, as part of an overall strategy to help put an end of human smuggling.

We have heard from ordinary Canadians that they want our borders to stay open to newcomers who play by the rules when they come to our country, but firmly shut against those who would abuse our generosity, threaten the integrity of our immigration system and pose a risk to our safety and security.

They have told us they want Canada to remain the welcoming country it has always been for newcomers. However, they have also told us that human smuggling operations must be stopped.

The arrival of two migrant vessels from Southeast Asia over the past two years, the MV *Ocean Lady* and the MV *Sun Sea*, have proved the reach and determination of organized human smuggling networks in their efforts to target Canada.

Government Orders

We have heard from experts in the field that Canada is the destination of choice for human smugglers and that criminal networks are evolving and adapting to utilize more sophisticated ways of moving their cargo.

Canada, therefore, needs to be ever more vigilant and more aggressive in cracking down on the ringleaders of this worldwide criminal operation, not less, as some have suggested.

The truth is that human smugglers are not at all interested in helping individuals in need. They do not care about individuals. They do not care about families. They make victims of their passengers, who must pay dearly, and risk their lives to undertake perilous journeys. Human smugglers only care about money and are working every day to increase the profits from their illegal activities.

Most of all, Canadians gave our government a strong mandate to continue building on our track record of making our streets and communities safer for everyone by cracking down on criminals and organized crime groups however they may operate and from wherever they may operate.

One way our government intends to do that is by passing legislation this fall to, among other things, tackle organized drug crimes and establish tougher sentences and mandatory jail terms for child molesters and those who use the Internet for this purpose.

We will end house arrest for serious and violent offenders. We will bring measures to ensure pardons can be refused in cases involving serious crimes against children. We will equip our police with new investigative powers designed for the computer age.

Our government was quite clear in our 2011 platform that such legislation would be passed within 100 sitting days of the return of the House, and ours is a government that delivers on its commitments.

We were equally clear in our platform that another way our government would continue to stand on guard for Canada and protect the safety and security of Canadians would be by cracking down on human smuggling. That is why we are here today. Bill C-4 is all about that. It is about delivering on our commitments to Canadians. It is about standing on guard for Canada and taking action to keep our streets, communities and borders safe.

Bill C-4 would, first and foremost, crack down on those criminals who would abuse our generous immigration system and endanger the safety and security of our Canadian communities.

We are providing a strong deterrent to those who are organizing human smuggling operations to jump the queue into Canada and we are ensuring the integrity and fairness of Canada's immigration system for years to come.

Government Orders

Under this act, our government would enable the Minister of Public Safety to designate the arrival of a group of persons as an irregular arrival and make those involved subject to the act's measures. It would make it easier to prosecute human smugglers. It would impose mandatory minimum prison sentences on convicted human smugglers. It would hold shipowners and operators to account for the use of their ships in human smuggling operations.

● (1730)

As part of the legislation, designated arrivals would face mandatory detention for up to one year to allow Canadian authorities to determine admissibility and illegal activity. In short, the detention period would provide more time to identify those who had arrived in our country and whether they posed a threat to our national security. Canadians deserve nothing less.

That provision is no different than the provision that occurs on a regular basis inside our criminal court system. Many of us who have been involved either as prosecutors or defence lawyers in the court system understand that if an accused person refuses to identify themselves, or if the court is not sure of the identity of the accused, the accused remains in custody until that determination can be made. The problem is it is so much more difficult when strangers arrive at our shores without any identification and we have no idea from where they are coming or who in fact they are.

Under the act, our government is also reducing the attraction of coming to Canada by way of illegal human smuggling operations. This includes measures like preventing those who come to Canada as part of an irregular arrival, including those who subsequently obtain refugee status, from applying for permanent resident status for a period of five years.

The act would ensure that the health benefits participants receive would not be more generous than those received by other members of the Canadian public. It would enhance the ability to terminate refugee applications of those who would return to their country of origin for a vacation or would demonstrate in other ways that they were not legitimately in need of Canada's protection. It would also prevent individuals who participate in human smuggling events from sponsoring family members for a period of five years.

Bill C-4 is virtually identical to the legislation our government introduced in the House of Commons last year. There are minor revisions, most notably one which puts the responsibility for designating an irregular arrival event in the exclusive purview of the minister rather than delegating it.

As hon. members know, the legislation which our government introduced in the fall proposed that the Minister of Public Safety would be allowed to designate those who land on our shores, in a way similar to those aboard the *MV Sun Sea* or the *MV Ocean Lady*, as an irregular arrival. The minister would make such a designation when he or she had reasonable grounds to believe that establishing the identity or admissibility of the individuals coming to Canada as part of such an arrival could not be carried out in a timely manner or if he or she had reasonable grounds to suspect that the arrival of the group involved organized human smuggling activity.

The legislation before us today retains those provisions and adds another stipulating that the designation must be made by the Minister of Public Safety personally and cannot be delegated.

The measures which our government is proposing are tough, but they are fair. They are fair to those who legitimately and legally wait, or have waited in line for a better life in Canada. It is fair for all Canadians who rightfully expect that our borders and shores are protected and secure and our generous social systems are protected from abuse.

For those who want to jump the queue or target Canada for criminal gain, these measures are a message, clear and direct: Canada will not tolerate human smuggling and if one wants to come here there are fair, legal and legitimate means to do so.

These measures will enhance our ability to crack down on those who engage in human smuggling and try to exploit Canada's generous immigration system. They will strengthen our ability to protect Canada from criminal or terrorist threats and they respect our international obligations to provide assistance for those legitimate refugees who need our protection and help to start a new and better life.

Every year Canada welcomes nearly 14,000 refugees to our country. As a share of our population, that number represents more than any country in the world. Nothing in Bill C-4 changes this. Nor are there any provisions in the bill that would result in Canada returning someone to face torture or risk to their life in their native country.

From coast to coast to coast, Canadians want to help those in need or those who genuinely need our protection, but that does not make us naive and it does not make us pushovers. Canada and Canadians want tough measures to stop those who would abuse our generosity from becoming part of Canadian society.

● (1735)

We know that threats exist and that we must remain vigilant. That is why our government is taking action. That is what our government is doing today, and this is what we will continue to do in the future.

I would therefore urge all hon. members to support the legislation before us today and work with our government to ensure its speedy passage.

I would like to propose a motion to the House dealing with the bill. We are approaching an adjournment, and as you know, Madam Speaker, during the adjournment, we could be faced with another crisis like we faced with the *MV Sun Sea*.

Therefore, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House for the following: That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of this House, Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act, be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. minister have the consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. Vic Toews: Madam Speaker, I am quite disappointed that the New Democrats and the Liberals would refuse consent. It certainly is a matter of urgency. However, this is fairly typical of both of those parties. They are more concerned about furthering criminal operations as opposed to actually stopping criminals from gaining access to our country.

The motion was a very reasonable one in moving the bill forward so our law enforcement agencies, our immigration, CBSA and others would be in a position to help secure our borders and determine identity in a timely fashion so human smugglers could not take advantage of our country.

It is unfortunate the New Democrats and the Liberals would oppose that unanimous motion, but this is a democracy and that is the rule of the House.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Madam Speaker, a 12-year-old child with her mother, flying in from Haiti tomorrow, could be designated by the minister as coming in irregularly because the child and the mother may not have any documents. The child and her mother could be jailed for at least a year and she would be prevented from becoming a landed immigrant and/or from helping to bring the brothers and sisters over from Haiti, or from Syria or from whatever country for at least five years.

I have several questions for the minister. What criteria would he use to designate irregular arrival? Would flying in be termed as irregular arrival? Does it have to come from boats?

The minister also talked about a group of people. Two persons, in my dictionary, is not a group of people, but under this law, he would have the right to designate two persons coming by air, which is the majority of the people coming across the border. How would he justify this kind of designation?

• (1740)

Hon. Vic Toews: Madam Speaker, let me deal with some of the preamble. The criteria the minister must consider to designate are set out in the act. If those criteria are utilized in unreasonable fashion, having consideration for all of the circumstances, then that is obviously reviewable in the superior court by way of judicial review. Therefore, the minister has to address his or her mind to all of the circumstances and look at the criteria in the act. I would commend those criteria to the member's attention.

In respect of a 12-year-old child, there is a specific exemption in terms of vulnerable individuals in these groups who can be released earlier. The purpose of the detention is in order to determine identity, which takes some time to determine when individuals have, for example, arrived in our country without any identification documents at all.

Many times individuals get on to planes, for example in that circumstance, with identity documents and, assuming those circumstances, they get off the plane without identity documents. That, in my opinion, raises a suspicion that something is wrong. Whether that is irregular arrival or not is something else.

Government Orders

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think I distinctly heard the minister say that those people who were opposed to passing this bill in all stages as quickly as possible were in fact in favour of, or were interested in furthering criminal activity.

I wonder if the minister would reconsider those words and consider what in fact he is saying about members of Parliament who have a different point of view from him, and apologize to all of us and to the House.

Hon. Vic Toews: Madam Speaker, let me clarify my remarks. I certainly did not mean any intention to commit a criminal offence by this member or any other member. However, it is a consistent pattern by both those parties that they put the rights of criminals ahead of the interests of victims or law-abiding Canadian citizens.

In fact, in 1971, I assume that was in the Trudeau cabinet, one of the predecessors to this office, Solicitor General Goyer, said in effect that in this country we have considered the interests of public safety far too long and we will now consider the rehabilitation of criminals as paramount, at that point standing the entire criminal justice system on its head.

What our government does in marked contrast to Liberals and New Democrats is put the justice system back onto—

The Deputy Speaker: Order please. On a point of order, the hon. member for Toronto Centre.

Hon. Bob Rae: Madam Speaker, I distinctly asked the minister whether he would withdraw language which is not only unparliamentary, but if he said it outside it would be the subject of a lawsuit.

I would like to ask the minister, is he prepared, yes or no, to withdraw the absolutely unfair and disgraceful accusation that somehow members of the opposition, who disagree with him, are in favour of furthering criminal activity. Will you withdraw those words, yes or no?

Hon. Vic Toews: Madam Speaker, I understand that he directed that to you, whether you would withdraw the words.

Hon. Bob Rae: Madam Speaker, on the same point of order. Let the minister play around as much as he wants. He and members on his side claim they want to be civil, they want to be decent and they want to respect decorum, yet each and every day he comes into this House and says things which are preposterous. Now he has gone too far.

I would like to ask the Speaker, will you rule clearly, Madam Speaker, when somebody accuses other members of participating in criminal activity, is that something the Speaker of this House is going to allow or not?

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for raising the issue. Indeed, if a member or members are accused directly of criminal activity that would constitute unparliamentary language.

What I will suggest is that I will review the script. I did not hear the exact word. I will review the script and, if necessary, come back with a ruling on this issue.

On a point of order, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Government Orders

• (1745)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The Minister of Public Safety misspoke. I want to make sure the record is clear that the Green Party stands with the NDP and the Liberals opposing this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments. The hon. member from Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I certainly enjoyed the speech by the minister. He certainly did a good job of outlining the parameters of the bill. In my riding people are very supportive of the measures that this bill contains.

Many of us in this House, probably all of us, have had the opportunity of either sponsoring refugees or working with refugees in our own ridings. I certainly have had that privilege and I have also had the honour of attending many citizenship ceremonies where Canadians are taking that oath of citizenship for the first time and it is a really moving experience.

I have found that in relation to this bill it is many of those previous refugees who are now citizens, or new citizens who have just come to this country in the past three to five years, who are in fact some of the most supportive people when it comes to this bill.

I am wondering if the minister could confirm that he has also experienced that kind of support from new Canadians.

Hon. Vic Toews: Madam Speaker, I can confirm the concern that many Canadians, including new Canadians, have. Many new Canadians have family members who are waiting in the queue, so to speak, to come to this country.

Canada is a very generous country. Under our government we accept record numbers of immigrants and over 250,000 refugees. On a per capita basis, Canada accepts more refugees than any country in the world. We are very proud of that.

It must be very frustrating to many of the new Canadians when they see criminal organizations bringing individuals here who jump that waiting time. That is disappointing for many Canadians who say that they are playing by the rules and are carrying out what they are required to do. They want to know why this is being allowed to happen.

This is a response to keep the integrity of the immigration system and target criminal activity.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Canadian Council for Refugees has expressed its deep disappointment at the reintroduction of Bill C-4 because it violates the rights of refugees. The government says the bill is aimed solely at smugglers, but it is the people who are fleeing persecution—including children—who will be punished if this bill passes. There is therefore little or no deterrent effect on smugglers.

Can the minister tell me when the government will decide to go after just the criminals, and not the migrants?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: Madam Speaker, the difficulty is that when a ship arrives at the border of our country at a port and there are 100,

200, or 300 people without identification. There is no way of determining who is the criminal, who is the legitimate refugee and who is an economic immigrant.

That determination has to take place over a period of time. These measures are designed in order to ensure that Canadian authorities can determine who these individuals are. That is what Canadians expect, that those who arrive at our borders, if they do not have appropriate documentation for one reason or another, that in fact there is a mechanism for ensuring that those who come to our country do not come with evil intent.

• (1750)

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Madam Speaker, there is one word to describe Bill C-4 and that word is cruel. The dictionary defines cruel as inflicting pain or suffering, and that is exactly what the bill would do. It is designed to punish refugees. If passed, the bill would inflict pain and suffering on the most vulnerable people trying to get to our shores.

Why do I say that? I say that because the bill would not punish smugglers. Under our present legislation, a smuggler would be jailed for life. We have the most severe punishment for people convicted of smuggling. What could be more severe than putting them away for life? We cannot get more severe. The bill is not really about the smugglers. It is about the refugees.

This legislation would require the mandatory detention of all people arriving in Canada, including women and children, whether they arrive by foot, by boat or by air. A mom and a two year old child, a five year old child, or a baby, would be jailed a minimum of 12 months. After they serve that 12 months they might receive some consideration. They would also be denied permanent residence or family reunification for at least five years.

Let me use as an example a dad who leaves a troubled country and his wife and children are left behind in a refugee camp. He arrives in Canada by himself and gets designated by the minister. The minister could not even explain a few minutes ago what criteria he is going to use. He mentioned those individuals who do not have documentation. Most refugees who come to Canada do not have documentation. How can we expect people who live through an earthquake or arrive from a war-torn country to have identification? A lot of refugees arrive at our shores without identification. They could be designated. More than two refugees who arrive on our shores could be designated as a group.

Let me revert to my example of the dad who arrived in Canada after fleeing from a war-torn country. Under this rule he would be sent to jail for at least a year. Let us say that he goes through the process and is determined to be a genuine refugee. For five years he would not be able to sponsor his wife and children from a refugee camp. What does that mean? It means that he will be separated from his family for at least seven years. These refugees will have to determine whether or not they want to leave their loved ones behind because they will not see them for at least seven years. Do they want to come to this country alone or do they want to make a dangerous journey together? That is why I say the bill is cruel. But that is just the beginning.

Government Orders

If these people do become refugees they have no chance to go to the United Nations to speak in a criminal court against a dictator who inflicted war crimes against them. For example, a woman who has been raped by the militia could not go to the UN to explain to the court what happened to her. Even though she is determined a genuine refugee, she will not be able to travel anywhere for at least five years. This means that she would not be able to go to the UN to bring war criminals to justice.

• (1755)

Why would the Conservatives bring forward a bill like that? The minister nailed it right on the head. He wants immigrants to think that there are all kinds of queue jumpers. There is in fact a huge amount of frustration from the immigrant communities. They are frustrated because they are waiting at least 6 to 10 or 13 years before they can bring their loved ones to Canada. When they try to sponsor their fathers and mothers, they are told that it will take 5 or 10 years. They wait and wait.

I will give some statistics. The backlog for parents who are waiting to come to Canada is in the hundreds of thousands. Why? It is because the number of visas for parents and grandparents issued this year has been reduced to close to 44%. It is getting longer and longer. This year there are only 11,000 parents who can come to Canada, which is a reduction of 9,000 because the 2005 and 2006 targets were 20,000. It is now only 11,000.

Immigrants are resentful because they are waiting longer and longer to bring their loved ones to Canada. Then they are told that there are people jumping the queue. These people are not jumping the queue because they are refugees and there is no queue for them to line up in. If they are in danger, they have to leave, unlike their parents, which is a completely different class of applications.

On top of that, the Conservative government claims to have cut the backlog of skilled workers. I do not know whether members will recall that a few years ago Bill C-50 got stuffed into a budget bill that was passed in the House of Commons with the help of Liberals supporting them. That bill was called fast, fair and efficient in cutting the backlog. Actually, the backlog for skilled workers grew. In 2005, it was 487,000 and now it is 508,000. It has grown by 173,000.

This so-called clearing the backlog is not working for skilled workers and it is not working for parents and grandparents. There are hundreds of thousands of people waiting patiently, some not so patiently, to come to Canada. It is under this failed immigration policy that the Conservatives try to find a scapegoat. Immigrants are really upset that they have to wait so long. The Conservatives try to find a scapegoat and say that it is not their fault. They say that it is not due to the Conservatives, that it is really the refugees' fault, which is why this bill was introduced, to my mind.

Let us look at the details in this bill. The mandatory detention for people arriving in Canada without any chance of review is at least 12 months, children or not. By the way, I do not know whether members of Parliament have read psychological studies of children being detained but studies done in the U.K. show that, even in just a few months of detention, what happens to a child is tragic. They wet their beds, some become mute, others stop learning, they become withdrawn, they are not able to go to school because they cannot focus, some lose a lot of weight and some eat much less.

Psychological scars are inflicted on children who are being jailed for not just a few weeks or months, but we are jailing them for at least a year. It is totally unjustifiable.

There is mandatory detention for 12 months. There is a denial of the right to apply for permanent resident status until five years have passed, and that is after a favourable determination of their protection claim. These are genuine refugees. I am not talking about the bogus ones. If there are those who are determined to be bogus, deport them, that is fine. I am talking about genuine refugees. They are not even allowed to assimilate to Canada because they cannot become landed immigrants.

• (1800)

They also would be denied access to relief based on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. They cannot get temporary resident permits or refugee travel documents for five years or longer. They are not given the right to appeal to the refugee appeal division, which is unfair. On top of that, the minister has the discretion to designate foreign nationals. It is not limited to mass arrivals. It could be two, three or four people and it could be applied retroactively to March 2009. This bill could be passed in 2012 but it could be retroactively applied to a few years before. I do not know how that could be called fair.

As I said earlier, the arrival of two or more persons by irregular means could attract designation.

Much has been said about the denial of detention reviews, because it is mandatory that they be jailed for at least a year, which breaches sections 9 and 10 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms because these rights are supposed to protect people against arbitrary detention and the right to prompt review of detention.

If we look carefully, why is it that we need to protect them? Why are we jailing them? Normally a person is jailed because they are a danger to the public or that person is a flight risk and could disappear.

In these circumstances, when we jail a child, a refugee or these people, the government does not have to prove that the person is a flight risk or endangering anyone. A person would be detained even though they are not endangering anyone in this country or not trying to fly anywhere and disappear. They would still be jailed for at least a year without access to any appeal whatsoever.

We know that this kind of behaviour not only breaches sections 9 and 10 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms but it is also in conflict with our obligations under the convention relating to the status of refugees and the international covenant on civil and political rights.

It is interesting that this bill makes no reference to the human smuggling issues. Just a few months ago, the immigration committee dealt with several bills. It dealt with Bill C-35, which cracked down on crooked consultants. At that time, on behalf of the New Democratic Party of Canada, I expanded the amount of time that we could go after people who are smuggling from 6 months to at least 10 years.

Government Orders

We already closed the loopholes, because it used to be that we could only go after them for six months. If we could not catch them and prove that they had committed an offence, then we could not go after them after six months. We expanded it for a long period of time.

As I said earlier, if convicted it means life imprisonment, so this has nothing to do with going after smuggling.

The amendments in this punishing refugees bill would affect permanent residents and foreign nationals regardless of how they arrived in Canada. What it does is it expands the grounds on which the port of entry officers can detain permanent residents and foreign nationals, it would expand the grounds on which permanent residents can be kept in detention while the minister takes "responsible steps" to inquire if they are suspicious.

• (1805)

Lastly, it would remove the appeal rights from the Refugee Protection Division. This would apply to permanent residents also, not just refugees. Therefore, this bill is not just punishing refugees, it is punishing permanent residents as well.

Another problem with the bill, and the minister, by not answering my question, alluded to it, is that it would give tremendous power to the minister to designate people coming into this country. Anyone coming into the port of entry by any mode of travel could be called an "irregular arrival". Actually, most refugees arrive in Canada irregularly.

In the 1930s, the *S.S. St. Louis* carried a large number of refugees fleeing Nazi Germany to Halifax. They came without a lot of documentation and arrived on the shore of Halifax and Canada sent them away. Some of them died at the hands of the Nazis.

With this bill, we are not sending a ship away. We could assume that if a ship like the *S.S. St. Louis* arrived on the shore of Victoria instead of Halifax, the women, children and the entire family would be detained in jail for a year. They would then be subjected to a search of their documentation to ensure they were really from Germany. They would then go through the process. Assuming that all of them would be declared refugees, they would not be able to bring any of their loved ones to Canada safely for five years. This is the kind of treatment we would be putting refugees through in coming to our shores.

I want to point out that most refugee claimants coming to Canada obtain documents from agents and sometimes these documents are not necessarily their real identity. For some of the genuine refugees this is the only way they can leave their country and come to safety. It is because there is no other way they can get on commercial carriers. With this bill, any group of two or more claimants leaving a country that is homophobic, for example, or they are being pursued, when they arrive here they could be designated as an irregular arrival and be subjected to that kind of treatment.

There are other aspects of this bill that are extremely draconian. For example, after the 12 months of detention, refugees are then allowed some kind of hearing every few months. However, that would also be very difficult. It means that they could face an indefinite detention.

In summary, this bill is not designed to prevent human smuggling because we already have laws that do that. It is designed to distract the public and put the blame for the long wait list that immigrants now have to endure in order to bring their loved ones to Canada on people who are desperately trying to leave a dangerous situation. It is unfair, cruel and not worthy of our support.

• (1810)

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the member. She made reference to the *St. Louis*, which made its way from Hamburg, Germany in 1939. She claimed that the people on-board the *St. Louis* had no documentation. Does she know that as historical fact, or was that just conjecture on her part?

Ms. Olivia Chow: I said "if" they do not. I do know that if the people on the boats who arrive have documentation, we will know where they are from, which makes the situation even more tragic. The fact that the House of Commons at the time rejected them indicated that we knew very clearly where they were from. However, because they arrived en masse, in a group in an irregular way, they too will be subject to irregular arrival, so they will be designated under this law, if the law applies at the time. All of them will be put in jail for at least a year.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are some serious issues in regard to Bill C-4. We in the Liberal Party do not support Bill C-4. I think it is very important for us to recognize that what is really happening here is the establishment of a second tier or second class of refugee. We should all be very concerned why the government has chosen to push for that second class by establishing an irregular classification. It causes a great deal of concern.

The emphasis of the government should be to try to speed up the process of how we are processing refugees. It was not that many years ago, prior to this party being in government, that we had a 20,000-plus waiting list. Now we have backlogs of 60,000, virtually three times the number.

I wonder if the member could comment on the ways we should be improving this system, not necessarily bringing down the system and Canada's reputation as a country that has had an excellent way of dealing with refugees and a wonderful history. What should the government have been doing to try to improve our reputation worldwide and improve the current system we have today?

Ms. Olivia Chow: There are actually two streams of refugees. There are the ones that have applied outside Canada and then get sponsored by churches or by the government to bring them to Canada. There are about 4,000 or 5,000 like that. Then there are about 9,000 who have already landed in Canada and have applied for refugee status here.

The 4,000 or 5,000 who have applied outside Canada now have to wait about four or five years in refugee camps before they can make it into Canada. Therefore, the first thing the government should do is to shorten the wait times and ensure that these refugees in war-torn countries can come to Canada quickly. That is not the case right now.

Government Orders

Second, the wait list for those who are in Canada and are applying for refugee status in Canada has dramatically increased because the backlog has increased. Why? It is because the government, from 2006 to 2010, was not filling the vacant spots on the refugee board. As a result, the refugee board had no members to determine whether or not these were real refugees. Therefore, the backlog grew and the wait times became one or two or three years. It has become intolerable.

Therefore, last year the New Democratic Party of Canada worked with the government to approve Bill C-11, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act, to make the refugee-determination process faster and fairer. That bill got fast-tracked and was approved. All the government has to do is to implement its own law.

• (1815)

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, in the spirit of reciprocity, I want to point out that at the beginning of her speech, the member said that this bill was designed to be cruel and she then went on to say that meant an intent to inflict pain upon innocent people.

Is she saying that the minister is cruel and wants to inflict pain upon innocent people?

Ms. Olivia Chow: Madam Speaker, cruelty is defined as inflicting pain and suffering on others knowingly.

In my book, jailing a child for more than a year is cruel because the pain and the suffering the child would go through, not just immediately but all of her life, would be dramatic and the scars would not heal. So in my book, this bill is cruel. Whoever designed it is cruel because pain and suffering will be inflicted.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her intervention on this bill.

The minister stood a while ago and said this bill would prevent queue jumping. However, the only way people can jump the queue is if they are smuggled into Canada, yet the bill does nothing about the smuggling of immigrants.

I would like the hon. member to tell me why the minister would say something that does not exist in the bill.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Madam Speaker, in order not to look at our own failings, it is good to distract the public. Under the current government, the number of backlogged refugees has increased, the number of loved ones trying to come to Canada to be united with Canadians has increased dramatically, the number of skilled workers and entrepreneurs trying to come into Canada has increased dramatically. In fact, all wait times have increased dramatically. Also, the settlement services were recently cut this year by \$53 million.

For the Conservative government not to catch flak from the immigrant communities, I guess blaming the refugees coming to our shores is a very convenient way to deflect its failings.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Madam Speaker, the first point is that there has actually been an increase in funding for settlement services across the provinces. So the member, I am certain, would like to retract that comment.

I would also think the member would want to retract her comments with regard to the boatload of Jewish refugees who came to Canada. She distinctly said that those refugees did not have documentation. These refugees had documentation. They had passports, Nazi German passports, with a *j* stamped on them.

Now is not the time to revise history for the sake of one's political argument.

I wonder if the member would stand in this House, retract her comments and apologize to the people who would be offended by the comments she has made?

Ms. Olivia Chow: Madam Speaker, \$53 million was cut from the 2011 budget for support and integration services for new immigrants. It was a 10% cut. In Ontario, there was a \$43 million cut. On top of that, funding for these services in British Columbia was slashed by 8% or \$8.5 million, and Nova Scotia has been cut as well.

The Conservatives also held back more than \$200 million in promised settlement funding for Ontario during the last five years before the cuts were made.

• (1820)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Is the hon. member rising on a point of order?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I know the member did want to stand and apologize for her remarks with regard to the *St. Louis*.

I wonder if you would allow the member the opportunity to apologize to those people who would be offended by her comments with regard to revising history.

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the hon. member's comment. I believe this is a question of debate, so we will move on.

Does the hon. member for Peace River have another point of order?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, I know the member was actually preparing to stand to apologize when I stood, and I wonder if you would give her the opportunity to apologize to the House.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Madam Speaker, I have nothing to apologize for because when that ship left India and brought Sikhs to Canada, they arrived irregularly. They would be decimated under this bill and there is—

The Deputy Speaker: There seems to be a question of debate.

The hon. member for Peace River rising on another point of order or the same one?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, with regard to what the member just said—

The Deputy Speaker: I believe this is a question of debate and at the appropriate time, the hon. members may continue their debate.

Government Orders

Resuming debate with the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise on this important piece of legislation which was introduced in the last Parliament but did not proceed much further because of the election.

There is an observable pattern of behaviour with the Conservative government in terms of how it approaches complex and important issues, like the issue of human smuggling. When the government approaches issues like this, it seems to approach them without sufficient forethought, without focusing on the core of the problem, and without focusing on the substance of the issue.

In other words, the government focuses on sloganeering and photo-ops, sometimes to the detriment of the core of the issue. We have seen this with the issue of human smuggling and with other issues, like sentencing reform. The government does not address the issue. It only addresses the issue once it gets media attention that then attracts public concern.

For example, about a year before the government introduced Bill C-49, the government introduced Bill C-11. That bill was a source of much attention because the government made a compromise with the opposition parties to fast-track the legislation. With all the resources at the government's disposal, one would think it would have dealt with the issue of human smuggling in that bill, but it did not.

The government did not react to the issue of human smuggling until the *Sun Sea* arrived and received much media attention. It did not react until the issue of human smuggling became a sensational visual on the evening news.

The government does not do its homework when it presents legislation in the first place. It does not act on behalf of Canadians in a timely manner.

Let me be absolutely clear. We have no issue with the fact that we have to protect the security of Canadians. We do not want criminals and terrorists living in this country. We cannot put Canadians at risk. Liberal members have absolutely no quarrel with respect to the objective of the bill, which is to ensure that refugees who are accepted into Canada are legitimate refugees and do not pose a threat to the safety of Canadians.

It is also important that we adhere to certain principles when we vote on legislation. It is important that we do not vote for bills that offend the principles of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, for example. In other words, as parliamentarians it is our duty to not support legislation that could be deemed unconstitutional.

There is a practical reason for saying this. It is not just an academic statement to say that we have a duty to uphold charter principles or constitutional principles. There is a practical element to what I am saying. If we adopt legislation that is not charter-proof and

winds up in the courts, then that legislation will be struck down by the courts.

• (1825)

Then Canadians are left without the protection that they need, without the protection that was intended to be in the particular piece of legislation that has been deemed unconstitutional. It is a very practical concern that we get it right the first time, or we are going to run into problems in the long-run.

As I said before, either we will be voting for a bill that does not properly deal with all aspects of an issue, only to have to rush back later and pass legislation at the last minute to resolve a problem or to correct a lacuna in that previous legislation, or we will wind up with a bill or with legislation that has been struck down.

There seems to be an attitude on the part of the government that it does not matter whether a bill meets the charter test, that we will just pass it now, and if someone challenges it in the future, then we will let the courts deal with that. I call that a “so, sue me” attitude. In other words, someone may be telling me that my bill or legislation is not charter-proof, but I do not care, sue me later. I think that is a very inappropriate way to approach public policy.

Before I proceed to a detailed discussion of Liberal Party reservations about this bill, there are three points I would like to make.

One of them has been made already today. It is that refugees are not queue jumpers. There is a misconception among the public that refugees are queue jumpers. Canadians obviously react badly to the notion that someone's rightful place has been taken by another person whose claim in the queue is not legitimate.

I know many fine Canadians, who believe in charter principles and in human rights, who react negatively when they are told that refugees are queue jumpers. That pains me a great deal, to see them misled by the confusion that has been allowed to stand on this issue. That is the first point. Refugees are not queue jumpers.

The second point I would like to make, for the benefit of those watching or listening at home or who will be reading these debates, is that there is a system in this country for determining—

• (1830)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will be able to continue the next time this item is called for debate.

I t being 6:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:30 p.m.)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA



House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 146 • NUMBER 013 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 22, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 22, 2011

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

● (1400)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the pages.

[Pages and members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate our wonderful pages on their beautiful voices and thank them for that incredible moment.

[English]

I am rising today to remind us that 23 years ago next week was the first global scientific conference on the threat of climate change. Canada sponsored it. We were proud to have that conference opened by our Prime Minister, and the scientists gathered there made the following statement:

Humanity is conducting an unintended, uncontrolled, globally pervasive experiment whose ultimate consequences could be second only to a global nuclear war.

Since that time, the warnings of those scientists are no long future warnings of disappearing ice caps, retreating glaciers, increased floods and fires. They are the daily stuff of our newspapers.

Now is the time to reflect on the warnings of scientists to reinvest in their efforts and to ensure that once again Canada takes a lead globally in the fight to reduce greenhouse gases and protect our country.

* * *

● (1405)

ESSAR STEEL ALGOMA

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I rise in the House for the very first time, I am deeply grateful to my family, my campaign team and the constituents of Sault Ste. Marie

and area for their support in my being elected as the first Conservative member from Sault Ste. Marie since 1984.

Should corporate taxes be raised, which would have been necessary to fund the promises of the opposition, the ability of our major employer, Essar Steel Algoma, to compete in the global marketplace in an extremely volatile steel industry would be compromised, resulting in potential job loss.

Furthermore, a corporate tax increase would severely hinder the ability of Essar Steel Algoma to expand its port facilities, necessary to increase capacity and add to the 3,200 direct jobs already provided by Essar in Sault Ste. Marie.

I thank the ownership of Essar from India and the Ruia family for the investment they have made in Sault Ste. Marie and for the job opportunities they have provided.

I look forward to our government's negotiation of a trade agreement with India, as our dealings with that country have been exceptional and of such benefit to my riding.

* * *

[Translation]

CHÂTEAUGUAY—SAINT-CONSTANT

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank the voters of Châteauguay—Saint-Constant for placing their trust in me to stand up for their interests here, and I plan on doing so with conviction.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Canadian family, the Quebec family in general, and, more specifically, my own family. I would like to thank the members of my immediate family who helped me during the latest election campaign. Their work and valuable help literally transported me right here to Parliament.

I would also like to highlight the unconditional support of my partner, Jacinthe, who does a remarkable job of taking care of my three young children, Sara, David and William. I hope to make up for my absences by working with all hon. members in this House to build a better future, a healthy environment and decent conditions for all Canadian children, and by working to ensure that they also want to be part of a remarkable family. Let us hear it for families.

*Statements by Members**[English]***REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN**

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on July 9, Canada will join with many other countries in recognizing and celebrating the birth of the world's newest nation, the Republic of South Sudan.

There is much to celebrate in the independence of this new nation. Most important for all the people of that long-troubled region is peace after 22 years of civil war.

Even a recent dispute between Sudan and South Sudan was successfully negotiated this week, demilitarizing the border town of Abyei and allowing residents to move back home.

Canada, along with many other western and African nations, has invested heavily in the peace process. Our Canadian contribution to Sudan totals \$800 million in food aid, development and peace initiatives.

Even so, there is still much work to be done to secure a long-term peace in the Sudan, including resolving the conflict in Darfur. However, as the Prime Minister said recently, Canada remains committed to helping the Sudanese in "charting their future".

* * *

KIRKLAND

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 50th anniversary of the city of Kirkland.

[Translation]

Kirkland's history begins with the arrival of the Brunet family in the area in 1667. The Meloche and Daoust families were also among the first families to arrive.

Kirkland's town library is a testament to the spirit of volunteerism behind the city's social, sports and recreational life.

[English]

In 1971, nine women gathered together in an old wooden house to inaugurate the town's first library. The original modest collection of books was donated by the Boy Scouts, who went door to door to collect second-hand volumes. Through subsequent fundraising efforts, that at one point included raffling off a car, the Kirkland Public Library was well on its way to serving the fledgling community.

From its first mayor, Marcel Meloche, to its current mayor, John Meaney, Kirkland has been served by a long line of dynamic mayors, including Sam Elkas, later an MNA and Quebec cabinet minister, and Nick Discepolo, who sat in this House from 1993 to 2004.

[Translation]

I invite all of the members to join with me in wishing a very happy 50th anniversary to the people of Kirkland.

*[English]***BUILDING CANADA FUND**

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, I had the opportunity to attend two great events in Brandon—Souris.

The Kristopher Campbell Memorial Skateboard Plaza was officially opened this past Saturday. The skateboard park is named in memory of an enthusiastic young Brandon skateboarder whose life was cut tragically short. This park will become a meeting place for all in Brandon and is part of the city's plan to rejuvenate its downtown.

Following that, I had the privilege to take part in the grand opening of the Virden Regional Multi-Purpose Recreation Facility which features a 1,200-seat arena, change rooms for the pool, lounges, retail shops, a 500-seat banquet hall, fitness centre and walking track. This facility will provide much needed recreational opportunities for Virden and the entire western region of the province.

Both events were the product of successful partnerships between all levels of government, the private sector and community fundraising.

I am thrilled to see such positive results from our government's building Canada fund and was proud to participate in these wonderful grand openings.

* * *

● (1410)

*[Translation]***LOUIS-HÉBERT**

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the people of Louis-Hébert for the trust they placed in me on May 2. On election day, 73% of them voted, which was the highest voter turnout rate in all of Quebec.

The people of Louis-Hébert, like everyone in the Quebec City area, are warm and welcoming. And so, I want to invite all of the members of the House and their families to visit our region.

The north shore, the south shore, festivals, events, culture in all its forms, history, outdoor activities or a nice meal shared with friends—you will surely find whatever it takes to have a wonderful experience and create lasting memories.

Welcome, and enjoy your summer.

* * *

*[English]***SENIORS MONTH**

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, June is Seniors Month, and while others have risen in the House to pay tribute, I would like to add my voice of thanks to those who helped build this country and make it great.

Many seniors are veterans whose sacrifice we honour every Remembrance Day. Many others simply worked hard every day to build a better life for their children. Along the way, they built a better country for our grandchildren.

As we look toward Canada Day, we owe a deep debt of gratitude to our senior citizens. There is so much we can all learn from the wisdom and life experience of our seniors.

Our budget included a number of initiatives to help, including enhancements to the GIS for vulnerable seniors.

June also holds a special place in my heart for another reason. June is Scleroderma Awareness Month. My mother suffered from scleroderma, which is a progressive chronic connective tissue disorder. Hence, she became a senior for a precious short period of time.

I encourage Canadians to learn more at www.scleroderma.ca and let us find a cure.

* * *

[Translation]

JEAN BÉLIVEAU

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise here today to pay tribute to a man who began a journey on August 18, 2000, with the goal of walking around the planet to promote peace and non-violence for the children of the world.

With nothing but a three-wheeled stroller to carry his things, Jean Béliveau, from Montreal, has walked 75,000 km in 64 countries. Last week, he was in my riding of Saint Boniface and we were honoured to welcome him. His five-day stop in Winnipeg means that his 11-year journey is almost over. I applaud his dedication to such an important cause.

His journey coincided with a UN proclamation declaring 2001 to 2010 the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World.

I would like to thank Mr. Béliveau for coming to Saint Boniface. I wish him all the best and, as a mother, I would like to personally thank him for his dedication to children all around the world.

* * *

[English]

VICTORIA

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am deeply honoured that Victorians renewed their trust in me in the last election. I am excited to work with them to advance their priority issues and complement their creative efforts toward a national housing strategy; to continue building a vibrant community with a caring spirit; to protect our coastal waters from tanker traffic and our west coast fisheries from contaminated feed lots from fish farms; to protect and streamline our public health care so it is efficient and responsive; to foster a strong local economy that supports green technology, clean energy, small business and good jobs; to secure senior government help for our regional LRT; and to stop the privatization of Victoria Harbour.

Statements by Members

I am proud to represent Canada's most liveable community and I will use every labour at my disposal to respond to their needs and interests.

* * *

● (1415)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a grim anniversary is upon us, and that is the fifth anniversary of the kidnapping of Israeli Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit by Hamas.

The last five years have been excruciating for his loved ones who have not received even a sign of life in almost 18 months.

Canada has been steadfast in calling for Gilad Shalit's release. I would ask all hon. members to join me in repeating that call today.

We also repeat calls for Hamas to allow the Red Cross or Red Crescent to visit him immediately.

Galid Shalit's kidnapping is one of several sticking points in the peace process. If there is to be true progress toward a two-state solution, let us start with Galid Shalit's unconditional and immediate release. May it end his suffering and that of his family.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the newly elected chair of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, I look forward to working with committee members to move forward on important issues facing women in Canada.

We know that during times of economic recession and difficulty, women face significant challenges. Women still earn only 71¢ to the male dollar. The rate of women in poverty continues to grow. As corporations and government seek to roll back the rights, pensions and benefits of working Canadians, women are often left the most marginalized.

A shocking rate of senior women, around 14%, are left to live in poverty. Without national programs in housing and child care, many young women struggle to build a stable future.

Many women still face unacceptable violence because they are women, and shockingly aboriginal women face some of the highest rates of abuse and even murder.

There is great work to be done and we can do this by listening to women and women's organizations and together work to achieve equality in Canada.

* * *

BRANTFORD RED SOX

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Brantford Red Sox, steeped in tradition dating back to the start-up of the Canadian baseball league in 1911, celebrated its 100th anniversary last Friday.

Oral Questions

Fans gathered to pay tribute to the players and teams who were the heroes to many in my community, including this MP.

The highlights are many. From 1949 to 1954, many of the players came from the disbanded Negro baseball leagues after Jackie Robinson broke the race barrier. The great Satchel Paige pitched against the Red Sox at Cocksbutt Park.

The team won five consecutive post-war championships from 1958 to 1963.

The Red Sox hosted the only American league versus national league all-star game held outside the borders of the United States.

Yes, baseball has deep roots in Brantford.

I thank the Red Sox for baseball excellence over its first 100 years.

* * *

TRIPLE BAY EAGLES GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a remarkable group in my riding of Random—Burin—St. George's, the Triple Bay Eagles Ground Search and Rescue Team in the Clarendville area.

Comprised of 34 members, this volunteer group accumulated 3,935 hours of volunteer work last year, the highest in all of Newfoundland and Labrador. They routinely put their own lives in jeopardy and were among the first to respond last fall when hurricane Igor crippled the region.

This group exemplifies the tireless efforts of volunteers who keep many of our smaller towns and communities vibrant. Its work is invaluable.

I ask all members to join me in thanking the Triple Bay Eagles Ground Search and Rescue team for its continued commitment and dedication.

* * *

HARLEY HOTCHKISS

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with regret and deep sadness that I rise to advise the House of the passing of Harley Hotchkiss of Calgary, a true friend to all who knew him. Harley was best known as one of the people who brought the Flames north from Atlanta to Calgary.

Harley was a member of the Alberta Order of Excellence and a Companion of the Order of Canada. He truly desired a better country and did his part through various community initiatives.

The Calgary Brain Institute, named in his honour, the Stampede, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, Foothills Provincial General Hospital and the Alberta Paraplegic Foundation all benefited from his kind heart and generosity.

An adopted Albertan, Harley Hotchkiss found his career in our province but through his good deeds made it his home.

We send our deepest regrets to his darling wife Becky and to his family.

• (1420)

AIR INDIA

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, June 23 is a painfully sad day for thousands of Canadian families.

Twenty-six years ago, 329 people lost their lives in a tragedy known as the Air India bombing, the largest mass murder in Canadian history. Although a Canadian inquiry was launched and completed, many questions remain unanswered. Relatives still struggle to understand how it happened.

Today our hearts go out to each and every one of them. On the anniversary of this atrocity, I stand here asking all parties in the House to join together in remembrance of the victims and their families.

Canadian, British and Indian citizens perished on that flight, but countries all over the world mourn them today.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians gave us a strong mandate to secure our economic recovery and implement our low tax plan to create jobs and economic growth.

That is why our government has reintroduced and passed the next phase of Canada's economic action plan and increased the guaranteed income supplement for seniors.

We have also taken action to protect our economy by introducing legislation to put an end to work stoppages.

Canadians gave us a strong mandate to remain focused on the priorities of Canadian families, jobs and the economy, and that we will do.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

CANADA POST

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's message to workers could not be more clear: if they do not swallow whatever the employer gives them, then they can fully expect to get a worse raw deal in legislation from the government. The Conservatives are imposing even lower wages than the employer was offering to the workers.

He says that mail service is important to the economy and small business, but then he locks the door on the mail sorting plants and post offices. How can the Prime Minister blame the workers for the situation when it is his government that is shutting down the mail?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will get to the leader of the NDP's question in a second.

I would like to join with the member for Calgary Centre, as a Calgarian and a Canadian, in expressing my condolences on the death of Harley Hodgkiss, who was a great member of our community and our country.

In terms of the question, I think I have answered these questions before. The two parties to this dispute have been unable to resolve the dispute over a significant period of time. Through their actions, they are imposing greater and greater costs on the wider Canadian public. That is not acceptable to the government, and we will act to protect the wider interests of Canadians.

[Translation]

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is adding insult to injury. First it attacks workers, now it is disrespecting Quebecers. The NDP proposed to the Conservatives that we respect Quebec's national holiday by not sitting that day. The Conservatives said no. It is not important to them. I urge the Prime Minister to reconsider. The Standing Orders provide for this. We can resume sitting after the holiday.

Will the Prime Minister agree to suspend the work of the House and respect Quebec's national holiday?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this legislative measure is in place to protect the greater interests of the Canadian economy, our society and the general public. It is up to the NDP. This government is prepared to pass the bill quickly before the national holiday. I encourage the NDP members to do the same.

[English]

THE SENATE

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, will the Prime Minister show the same disrespect if we are forced to have to ask the House not to sit on Canada Day next Friday?

Disrespect is something we are seeing extended to the provinces with a force-feeding effort for legitimacy for the Senate. He is trying to create a two-headed monster, some elected, some not. He is trying to impose elections on provinces and premiers who do not want it.

Why not just give Canadians what they want: a chance to vote in a referendum on the future of the Senate?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the people of Quebec or across the country want to have any more referendums at this time.

The reality is that the government is not imposing anything on anybody here. The government has brought forward some modest and good reforms to the Senate of Canada. While I know this is not the position of the NDP, I would advise the NDP members to support these important reforms rather than aligning themselves with the forces of the status quo.

[Translation]

Oral Questions

HEALTH

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is once again telling us that the expiry of the health accord in 2014 is still a long way away and that it would be useless to start working on it now; however, the Wait Time Alliance's report says the exact opposite. The chair of the alliance, Dr. Lorne Bellan, has criticized the excessive amount of time people have to wait before receiving care. The longest wait times are here in Ottawa.

Will the Prime Minister wait until 2014 before taking action?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in addition to over 30% increases to transfer payments made to the provinces and territories for the delivery of health care, our government also provided additional funding, about \$1 billion, for the reduction of wait times in their chosen areas.

We continue to work collaboratively with the provinces and the territories to roll out the present health accord and to continue to reduce wait times, while respecting the fact that health care is an area of provincial jurisdiction.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, blaming the provinces is no answer. This is a joint responsibility. There is no question that the current system is costly and inefficient.

Our public health care system must move forward now to fit today's model of community care. We cannot wait until 2014. We need a long-term care strategy to free up hospital beds and support those with chronic health concerns.

How long do we have to wait before the government takes meaningful action to address these critical shortages?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has worked hard to protect and promote the health and safety of Canadians. In addition to our commitment to continue transfers of 6% to the provinces and territories, we made additional investments in pandemic preparedness, medical and neurological research, food and product safety, wait times, electronic health records, and aboriginal health.

We have also passed the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act, Cracking Down on Tobacco Marketing Aimed at Youth Act, and the Human Pathogens and Toxins Act. We continue to work with the provinces and territories.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the House has really heard, yet, an answer to a very simple question from the Prime Minister with respect to the Muskoka slush fund.

Oral Questions

I wonder whether the Prime Minister could explain to the House why it is that there was no paper record kept of the discussions which led to the decisions and why it is that public servants were kept away from those discussions.

These are both findings of the Auditor General. They are not my conclusions or anyone else's.

Could the Prime Minister please explain how these two very abnormal, unusual, and troubling events took place?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs has said repeatedly, he made the decisions in these cases. They were publicly communicated. They were for 32 infrastructure projects, all of which the money has been accounted for.

In terms of specific failings in the process that the leader of the Liberal Party raised, we have reviewed those matters, and are taking steps to ensure that those process failings are not repeated in the future.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister describes them as process failings. Let us try to understand what they were.

Either a minister alone or in company with other people made a decision without public servants being involved and giving advice with respect to the appropriateness of decisions, and without the benefit of professional advice. There is absolutely no paper trail with respect to how this decision was made.

The Prime Minister prides himself on efficiency and good governance. Any private board, any public company, in this country in which an official of the company made these kinds of decisions would be fired.

Why was the minister promoted and the person who condoned—

• (1430)

The Speaker: Order, please, the right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, ministers are responsible for decisions. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has taken responsibility for the decisions that he has made.

The fact of the matter is that, notwithstanding some of the process problems, this money was spent on 32 public infrastructure projects, all promoted by local municipalities. All the money is accounted for and those projects will serve those communities well into the future.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the funding discrepancy, the lack of a paper trail and the absence of any public servants are not an indication of problems related to the process, they are indications of an abuse of process.

Why not ask the Auditor General to conduct a value for money audit to explain how such an abuse of process occurred?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these projects were recommended by the municipalities and supported by our government. They are public projects. All the money allocated was spent on these projects. The Auditor General

made some recommendations, which the government accepted and will adopt in the future.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka's \$50 million in unjustified expenses, his spokesperson stated that the RCMP investigation was, and I quote, a "public relations stunt". That is interesting. During the days of the infamous sponsorship scandal, the member for Central Nova described the situation as, and again I quote, a "serious lack of ethical accountability".

Millions of dollars in expenses with no documentation and an RCMP investigation. Are we not getting a feeling of déjà vu here? [*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are so many mistakes in that preamble. The Auditor General has made some informed observations. We fully accept the advice of the Auditor General in the future.

Let us look at the five important points with respect to these initiatives: the money was spent on public infrastructure projects; every single penny was accounted for; every construction project was on time; costs came in under budget and, in fact, millions of dollars in this fund were not even spent; and all costs recorded were used for the purposes intended.

In fact, there are 32 individual contribution agreements to support each one of these public infrastructure projects.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the member for Calgary Southwest was in the opposition, he himself said that the Liberal government, with its history—

The Speaker: Order, please. There seems to be an interpretation problem.

Has the problem been resolved? Good.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, when the member for Calgary Southwest was in opposition, he himself said that the Liberal government, with its history of scandals and refusal to accept responsibility, had not earned the right to be given the benefit of the doubt.

The Conservatives were found in contempt of Parliament, and the RCMP is now investigating the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka's dubious spending.

Do the Conservatives realize that they are behaving in exactly the same manner as their Liberal predecessors?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report paints a pretty tawdry picture of how the Muskoka member diverted border infrastructure money on some pretty dubious pork barrel projects. It was by slipping past the checks and balances that are put in place to protect taxpayers.

Infrastructure Canada, frozen out; Treasury Board's implementation team, kept in the dark. He left no documents. He had no oversight. When it is \$50 million, it is not good enough to say, "I'm sorry, the dog ate my homework". No wonder the cops are investigating him.

When will he come clean with this House and say how he got away with that bauble—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

• (1435)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest just a few short weeks ago to a wise man who made comments like this, "We are prepared to have a tone of debate and discussion that is respectful. Canadians do not want insults. They do not like insults and attacks. We may disagree, but we must show each other respect".

I have taken up the challenge of the leader of the NDP. Why has my colleague from Timmins done such a terrible job in following the great example provided by the leader of the NDP?

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more insulting to the debate of this House than to have a minister who is promoted after a scandal breaks. Not just promoted but promoted to the Treasury board, and who sits there day after day after day, hiding under his desk like Mini-Me. That is insulting to the people—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am not sure how the hon. member expects to hear the answer to the question when his colleagues do not allow him to finish putting the question. He still has a few seconds left. If he wants to finish his question, then I will recognize the hon. minister.

I will go to the member for Timmins—James Bay for a very brief summary.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, when will he do the right thing, stand up, and be responsible to this House and to the people of Canada?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite wants to talk about insults. I think there could be no greater insult than to break faith with the people who elected us and say one thing before the election and do another thing afterward, like this member did with the gun registry.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want the truth. A year and a half ago, this House voted for a public inquiry into Canada's transfer of detainees and significant risk of torture in Afghanistan. Instead, we got a backroom deal which kept the lid on it for over a year. Now, the day before this House is scheduled to close for the summer, we are getting a document dump.

Does the Prime Minister seriously believe that this will satisfy the need for public accountability and a judicial review of Canada's international obligations?

Oral Questions

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP has spent the last two years professing its concern for the treatment of Taliban prisoners. Yet, as soon as there was a process in place where it could examine thousands of documents, it immediately headed for the door. If the members were that worried about Taliban prisoners, I would have thought they would have shown up for work.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, almost two years have passed since the former Speaker of the House of Commons ordered the Conservatives to find some means of providing MPs with access to documents concerning allegations of torture of Afghan detainees, all the while bearing in mind national security issues.

One year after a lame committee was established, it seems that the government is preparing to table a boatload of documents that, unfortunately, are not available in both official languages.

How much time do they need to do the job properly?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we did. We put in place a process whereby their other colleagues in the opposition, the Bloc and the Liberals, examined thousands of documents over the months, but the NDP members did absolutely nothing.

NDP members say they are concerned about Taliban prisoners, but let us face it, with friends like the NDP who needs enemies.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's bridges are falling down and the minister responsible is falling down on the job.

Four times in the last six months basketball-sized chunks of concrete have fallen down from Montreal's bridges near Champlain and Mercier, and just last Monday, a few days ago, from Toronto's Gardiner Expressway. It is a miracle that no one has been seriously injured.

Instead of cutting the infrastructure stimulus fund, why does this minister not do something to stop the concrete from falling down on innocent drivers and pedestrians?

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague and the Leader of the Opposition, I was also in municipal politics. No government has ever put as much money into infrastructure to help municipalities across the country as this government. Our government has invested the most money to improve road networks, drinking water systems and waste water treatment. We will continue to do so.

Oral Questions

• (1440)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister can blame the provinces, or the cities, or even the Liberals, but the fact remains that this government has no long-term plan for maintaining and replacing Montreal's bridges.

Even worse, by reducing corporate taxes, it is mortgaging our ability to meet future needs.

The people of Montreal will suffer greatly this summer because of horrible bottlenecks.

What is the minister waiting for to take action?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new NDP member should know that investing \$680 million in Montreal's bridges takes a plan and requires working with people who have carried out studies. It means investing in the right place, as we always do.

It is common knowledge that responsibility for managing city traffic rests with the municipal authorities. We will continue to ensure the safety of federal structures and do the required work.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, by investing only \$228 million over three years on infrastructure in the greater Montreal region, the minister is clearly ignoring the crisis that people there are experiencing.

The Premier of Quebec was clear: the federal government must make a commitment now to replace the Champlain Bridge.

The studies have been done. The Government of Quebec is ready. Montreal and the south shore are ready.

What is the minister waiting for to announce a new bridge right now?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[*English*]

The Speaker: Order, please. We cannot keep having standing ovations after every question. We will be here until 4 o'clock.

The hon. Minister of Transport.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the preamble to the question is untrue. The \$228 million in the budget we just passed, thanks to the Minister of Finance, is only for the bridges in Montreal. We have invested \$600 million in Highway 30 alone. This highway will be ready in 2012, and it is our government that did the work.

[*English*]

G8 SUMMIT

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the law is very clear that spending government money is "subject to there being an appropriation for the particular service".

The Auditor General was very clear that there was no appropriation for the service of building G8 gazebos. The money was supposed to be for border infrastructure.

If the government is so confident that it spent the money wisely why does it not invite the Auditor General to do a value for money audit?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General, in releasing his report, said two things. He said there was no deliberate attempt to mislead Parliament. He also said that he did not know any law that had been broken.

The Auditor General did make some observations, which the government fully accepts, on how we can be more transparent and clearer to Parliament. We fully accept those recommendations and will adopt them on future initiatives.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us try again.

[*Translation*]

During the G8 summit, \$50 million that should have been used to reduce congestion at the borders was spent in the minister's riding. The Auditor General said that he had "not encountered" anything like that. This use of public funds is so controversial that the RCMP has decided to investigate.

Will the government ask the Auditor General to conduct a value for money audit?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the preamble to that question is in fact not true. That is not the case, the member's assertion and I would suspect she knows it is not true.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thousands of Canadians are not able to work because the RCMP does not have the resources to process criminal record checks in a timely fashion.

A company known as DASCH has 51 people waiting on criminal record checks alone. This is a company that serves Manitobans with disabilities.

The RCMP does not have the resources it needs in order to get the job done.

Will the government provide the resources necessary that would enable people to get back to work?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we support law-abiding Canadians who selflessly give their time to coach, to volunteer with vulnerable groups, such as children, people who need to go to work.

That is why we are pleased to announce that live scan technology will reduce waiting times for these vulnerable sector checks. It is good news for volunteers, it is good news for employees, and it is good news for vulnerable Canadians who deserve the best protection possible.

• (1445)

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canada-Newfoundland Offshore Petroleum Board requested an environmental assessment of the Old Harry deposit. The Minister of the Environment needs to do his job and let the people concerned have their say. The gulf is an important source of revenue for coastal communities.

Is the minister willing to set up a federal review panel to examine the impacts on the entire gulf?

[English]

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that environmental effects of offshore oil and gas activities are considered so that these resources can be developed in a sustainable manner.

The minister received a request from the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board to refer the project to the review panel. The minister will consider this request and make a decision with respect to the next steps for the environmental assessment of this project.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a shocking report came out yesterday warning our oceans are on the brink of unprecedented mass extinctions.

Climate change, pollution, over-fishing and habitat destruction have brought this on.

However, instead of protecting our oceans, the Conservatives are cutting over \$56 million from the department's budget.

Will the minister reverse these cuts, immediately act on the report's recommendations and start protecting our oceans?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to responsibly managing Canada's oceans.

Our government has shown unprecedented leadership on this matter. As a matter of fact, we have invested in science as to better understand our oceans and have created new protected areas to conserve them, eight since 2006.

We are also pursuing protection status for an additional seven Oceans Act areas of interest, including three new areas announced on World Oceans Day.

Canada is actively involved internationally to ensure the adoption of science-based marine conservation programs by the United Nations and by various regional fisheries management organizations.

* * *

LIBYA

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats proposed and secured amendments regarding the mission in Libya, including an increase in humanitarian aid and that there would be a focus on strengthening our diplomatic role.

Oral Questions

The House also made it very clear that the UN mandate would focus on protecting civilians, as the UN calls for, and working toward a ceasefire.

In light of the Italian foreign minister's call for an immediate suspension of hostilities to establish humanitarian corridors to deliver that aid, can the Prime Minister tell us if he has been in contact with our Italian allies to work toward that kind of a ceasefire?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I spoke to Prime Minister Berlusconi at the G8 and I know that our governments have been in contact since. Obviously we would like to see opportunities to deliver humanitarian aid.

To this point the Gadhafi regime has been unwilling to stop its attacks on certain areas of the country. We would urge it to do so.

[Translation]

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is critical that the people of Libya receive humanitarian aid. For that to happen quickly, it is essential that a ceasefire, even a temporary one, be called.

What concrete action has this government taken to ensure that humanitarian aid is actually getting to the Libyan people? What aid has Canada given to Libyan civilians to date?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has contributed to international humanitarian efforts in Libya. However, it is sometimes impossible to deliver this aid to certain areas of the country because Gadhafi's military is attacking the Libyan people. We urge the Libyan government to stop these attacks on its own people.

* * *

[English]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that small businesses fulfill a crucial economic role in our country. They are on the front lines of economic activity by dealing directly with Canadians, both as employees and as customers.

The Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism knows this all too well, since he comes from one of the most entrepreneurial regions of our country, Beauce.

I would ask the minister to inform us about what this government has done to ensure that small businesses in Canada pay less tax and create jobs and wealth in this country.

• (1450)

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you know, it is our government that reduced taxes on small businesses.

Also it is the NDP that voted against our budget. The NDP record on the economy is nothing to be proud of. Just remember what happened in Ontario and B.C.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***TRADE AGREEMENTS**

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, trade agreements can benefit a country when it negotiates a good agreement. However, this government has abandoned Canadians with its bad agreements. The cost of patented drugs in Canada is the fourth highest in the world. But the European agreement offers nothing to improve the quality of our health care. It only increases our drug costs.

Will this government stand up for Canadians and work on improving the agreement?

[English]

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a trade agreement with the European Union would increase trade dramatically. This would create new jobs, prosperity and ensures our long-term prosperity as a country.

We will continue to consult closely with all of our stakeholders with respect to these issues in our negotiations. I can assure members that the one thing we will not do is sign an agreement that is not in the best interests of Canadians.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the point is that trade deals can be good for our country, but they have to be done well.

Unfortunately, this—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sure the hon. member appreciates the encouragement, but I will allow him to finish his question. Order, please.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, the point is, the government continues to negotiate flawed deals. The point is that the average price of patented medicines in Canada is already the fourth most expensive in the world. This deal does nothing but increase those costs.

My question for the government is, will it stand up for Canadian families and work with the EU to fix this deal?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question, but it is pretty rich for the New Democrats to now suggest that they are the great defenders of free trade. They have not supported one free trade agreement that Canada has ever signed, from NAFTA, to Costa Rica, Israel, Panama, Chile, Peru. It does not matter what the agreement is, they oppose it.

We are standing up for Canadians. Why will they not?

* * *

*[Translation]***SEARCH AND RESCUE**

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, closing the Quebec City maritime search and rescue centre could have serious consequences. Every summer, there are between 1,000 and 1,500 distress calls on the St. Lawrence River. This government plans to

centralize all operations in Nova Scotia, which will not be able to provide reliable service in French.

How can this government claim to keep all Canadians safe when its actions are jeopardizing safety?

[English]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated many times in answering questions, safety will not be compromised in any way. Bilingual services will be offered, as always.

I would ask the member opposite if New Democrats doubt the words of Lieutenant-Colonel Blakeley, who said last week, “We’ve just reached a point where technology allows us to do everything out of the three main joint rescue communication centres”, or does she doubt the words of the deputy commissioner of the Coast Guard, who said, “The people doing the on-water responses are the same people going to the same locations they have always gone to. Their ability to respond isn’t affected by—”

• (1455)

The Speaker: The hon. member for St. John's East.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this Saturday I will join in a rally in St. John's to protest the closure of the Marine Rescue Sub-Centre. The people of my province know how vital this centre is to the safety of those in peril at sea, but the government will not listen to them. Instead, the minister belittles the work of the rescue centre by referring to it as a call centre.

When will the Prime Minister apologize for these insulting remarks and finally reverse this irresponsible decision?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite's question, but the point of the matter is that the current levels of service provided by the Canadian Coast Guard and the safety response and bilingualism will not be affected. Mariners in distress will continue to be served by the same people, the same lifeboats, the same ships, the same Coast Guard, the same helicopters. All of the same people are in place. This will have no impact on the service provided to our mariners and their safety.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): In Europe, Mr. Speaker, it is compulsory for negotiators of the Canada-EU trade agreement to keep parliament informed and obtain consent on all stages of negotiations. Yet here all we get is secrecy from the government.

The current position would have Canada adopt EU intellectual property standards, forcing higher drug costs on Canadians, \$2.8 billion in fact. Last fall, the negotiator admitted that there was no critical internal analysis done. What is the minister's specific position on the costs of drugs as it relates to the agreement—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International Trade.

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the European-Canada free trade negotiations are going to lead to a boost in trade for Canada in the order of \$12 billion per year. We are talking about a dramatic increase in trade between our respective countries.

With respect to the negotiations that are ongoing, there are many aspects of that agreement that still have to be negotiated. I wish the member would not prejudice the outcome of those negotiations. We are standing up for Canadians. We will only sign an agreement that is in the best interests of Canadians.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am not sure how the hon. member for Malpeque heard the answer because his colleagues certainly were not allowing him to listen to the response.

The hon. member for Vancouver Centre I hope will have better luck.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Wait Time Alliance reported yesterday that Canadians are waiting far too long for emergency hospital beds. One in six acute-care beds are occupied by a patient needing home or long-term care. Just one of those beds blocks four patients an hour in emergency rooms.

The 2004 accord promised a home care strategy. Seven years later there is none. The Health Council of Canada cites lack of federal leadership, not funding, as the problem. When will the Prime Minister show leadership, call a first ministers meeting and implement a home care strategy?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the importance of timely access to health care and is working to support the provinces and territories in their efforts to reduce wait times in the targeted areas across the country.

We have increased transfers by 6% a year, and 33% since we formed government. At the same time, we invested \$1 billion to support the provinces and the territories in reducing their wait times in targeted areas. The provinces and territories continue to roll out those priorities.

* * *

[Translation]

SHALE GAS

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday a petition was presented calling on the government to disclose which chemicals are used in the shale gas industry. Studies

commissioned by the U.S. Congress have shown that fracturing fluid can contain up to 650 toxic chemicals.

Will the government listen to Quebeckers and Canadians and force companies to disclose which chemicals we are dealing with?

[English]

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the regulation of shale gas production is mainly a provincial-territorial responsibility, except on federal lands.

Federally, jurisdiction over shale gas development falls under the mandate of several departments, agencies and boards. Environment Canada officials have been given the opportunity to comment on provincial and territorial environmental assessments.

We have been and will continue to monitor ongoing studies that relate to shale gas.

• (1500)

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week the minister told us that research was being conducted on the impacts of hydraulic fracturing for shale gas. Last year, the former minister told us that shale gas regulations were “a work in progress”, even though drilling had already started.

The drilling is happening, we have yet to see the promised regulations and we do not know what chemicals are being pushed into the ground. Instead of taking a page from Talisman Terry the Fracosaurus, will the minister actually act on behalf of concerned Canadians?

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure industry enjoys being called names like that in the House of Commons.

Our government does stand for environmental sustainability balanced with economic growth. That is why, at the moment, there are five Canadian provinces that are about to conduct reviews regarding the practices and chemicals used in the development of this resource. That is also why Environment Canada continues to monitor ongoing studies related to shale gas production.

* * *

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 2, Canadians voted to give our government a strong mandate to continue our support for economic growth and job creation through innovation, research and development.

Would the parliamentary secretary for FedDev Ontario update the House on the results of our government's support for research in southern Ontario?

Oral Questions

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by thanking the hon. member from Barrie for his excellent work as chair of the all party caucus on juvenile diabetes.

On Monday, the minister of state for FedDev Ontario joined with the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation in launching the Canadian Clinical Trial Network. This network will test new technologies and treatments, such as an artificial pancreas, to help Canadians suffering with diabetes.

This is a difficult disease with which many families are struggling. We want them to know this government is on their side and that we are going to work hard to develop the research to help them move forward.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to believe that the Conservative government is denying a region of young hockey players a place to play, and northern Cape Breton is just that region.

It is not that the people of the area have not stepped up to the plate with their share but because the Conservative government refuses to help them. The government was approached two years ago.

The Conservative government spent over \$50 million for fake lakes, but it cannot help this community with an ice surface. The ministers for ACOA and infrastructure and defence should be ashamed of themselves. Why have they not helped this community?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member obviously referred to a specific project. He would know that hundreds of projects have been approved under the economic action plan for Atlantic Canada and that Cape Breton, just like Nova Scotia and all the Atlantic provinces, has been well served.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's right-wing ideological agenda for the Canadian Wheat Board threatens to put an end to Canada's only deep water Arctic seaport, the port of Churchill, 90% of whose traffic comes from the Canadian Wheat Board. Killing the Wheat Board would be devastating for farmers and northerners in Churchill, along the bay line and across the north. So much for the government's commitment to the Arctic.

Why are the Conservatives abandoning farmers and northerners? Why do they not stand up for the people of the Prairies and save the Canadian Wheat Board and the port of Churchill?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote that member from yesterday in her own press conference, where she said:

the Port of Churchill is an alternative for farmers, an alternative that often allows farmers to save money, given the shorter distance...and the lower cost of using the Port itself.

Is that not a reason why farmers would use the port if they had the opportunity?

We are going to continue to move ahead, giving western Canadian farmers the same freedoms that other farmers have across this country, the freedom to market their own products, the freedom to take advantage of the opportunities that they have.

BETTY FOX

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was with great sadness that Canadians learned of the death of Betty Fox last week. She was a great Canadian and will be deeply missed.

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell us more about the extraordinary life of Betty Fox?

• (1505)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sadly, next week marks the 30th anniversary of the death of Terry Fox. Sadly again, Canada lost Betty Fox last week.

After she lost her son 30 years ago, Betty did not walk away with a broken heart. She reinvested herself in Canada. She helped create the Terry Fox Research Foundation. She helped create the Terry Fox Run. Through the incredible efforts of a beautiful woman in every sense of the word, these foundations have raised over \$600 million to fight cancer around the world.

We have set up a book of remembrance outside the House chamber in the lobby for all members of Parliament to sign to express their wishes and their solidarity as members of Parliament.

On behalf of all Canadians we send our deepest regrets to the Fox family for their loss and thank them for a beautiful woman who shared her life with Canada and did amazing things for all of us.

LIGHTHOUSES

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is alarming to discover that land attached to heritage lighthouses may be severed and sold off. Groups interested in preserving these structures see the land as integral to their plans.

The value of these lighthouses goes beyond the physical structures themselves, and the land is very much a part of these heritage sites. If we want to preserve and promote these sites, the land and lighthouses must remain unified.

Will the government commit to protecting Canada's heritage sites and reverse its plans to sell off this land?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the important role that lighthouses have played in our development as a nation. They are structures of great historical importance in the communities where they are located.

In keeping with the recommendations in the report, my officials will continue to work closely with Parks Canada in the implementation of the Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act.

* * *

[Translation]

SHALE GAS

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers are worried about shale gas development and, rightly so, are calling for greater transparency regarding the potential impact of extraction methods.

The federal government is ignoring their calls. Instead, it is giving oil and gas companies carte blanche, given that, unlike other industries, those companies do not have to report the pollutants they discharge.

Does the Minister of the Environment realize that this double standard, which favours oil and gas companies more and more, is preventing citizens from getting essential information, and will he commit to removing that exemption immediately?

[English]

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to reject the premise of that question because our government is not ignoring this issue.

That is why we are working with the provinces to comment on environmental assessments. That is why we are working with the five Canadian provinces that are about to conduct reviews, as I said earlier, regarding the practices and chemical use in the development of this resource.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of our distinguished former colleague and former leader of the opposition, the hon. John Reynolds.

Some hon. members: Hear! Hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND PRIVACY

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the annual reports on the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act of the Information Commissioner of Canada for the year 2010-2011.

These documents are deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

* * *

CANADIAN FORCES PROVOST MARSHAL

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the pleasure to

Routine Proceedings

table, in both official languages, copies of the 2010 annual report of the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal.

* * *

DOCUMENTS REGARDING AFGHAN DETAINEES

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling, on behalf of the government, information relating to Canadian-transferred Taliban prisoners reviewed as part of the ad hoc committee process of the last Parliament.

This information includes the report of the panel of arbiters on its work, on its methodology, as well as 362 documents, totalling over 4,000 pages, which the committee deemed a priority.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the panel of judges and the committee members for their work.

Given the high volume and the importance of providing these documents quickly to Parliament and to the public, I am seeking unanimous consent to table untranslated documents. I note that this would be consistent with the approach used in the last Parliament.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous—

On a point of order, the hon. member for Outremont.

• (1510)

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, you and I both know that your primary duty is to defend the Constitution and the rights of this House. One of the constitutional documents governing us is the Official Languages Act. The minister was referring to what happened in an ad hoc manner last year at the beginning of the process—he had an excuse, people wanted to know as quickly as possible—but that is not the case today. There is no possible excuse.

Earlier I was listening to the Minister of Justice, who is responsible for defending our rights, answer a question from one of my colleagues, the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst. He said that they had examined thousands of documents. There was absolutely nothing stopping them from having the documents translated as they went along. It is even more unacceptable to hear the minister claim the high cost of translation as an excuse.

Since when do our constitutional rights depend on the high cost to the government? This is a totally unacceptable situation and they are denying it. Look at the situation we are being put in. The media were duly notified that these documents were going to be tabled. We did not take part in this totally improper, bogus process and now we are being asked today, given the high cost of translation, to accept the tabling of these documents in English only. I was responsible for supervising the translation of Manitoba's laws and regulations following a Supreme Court ruling in 1985. The high cost of translation was one of the arguments put forward in the Supreme Court, but the Supreme Court immediately rejected it. It is unacceptable. The cost of translation cannot be used as an argument. This government, which has the gall to claim to respect rights, is tabling thousands of pages—which it could have had translated along the way—and saying that the cost of translation is too high. To the Conservatives, our rights cost too much and they will not respect them.

Routine Proceedings

Before giving our answer, I have one question. The minister speaks of 362 priority documents totalling 4,218 pages. He also says that these documents contain a report. Has the report been translated, yes or no?

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, it has nothing to do with the high cost of translation. The government was in the midst of saying very clearly that this information, which several members worked on, will be tabled in the House as soon as possible. We want to be transparent. Some documents are in English, while others are in French. It is not a matter of official languages. Before I rose to speak, I was asked to talk about this policy, and I heard the NDP had already said yes. If that is not the case, we can hear another opinion.

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please. It seems very clear there is a request for unanimous consent. It is up to the House to give consent or not.

I will allow the hon. member for Outremont one more point but then we should decide the question.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, first I will read back for my hon. friend, in the language of Shakespeare so he will understand it, what he said in this House a few minutes ago. He said, “Given the high cost of translation”. That is verbatim of what he just said to this House. That is his reason for not respecting the Constitution of Canada and the Official Languages Act.

He also referred to, and I will quote him verbatim, “including the report of the panel of arbiters”.

Our answer to the request for unanimous consent will be a function as to whether that report of the panel of arbiters has been translated. There can be no excuse for that. Has that been translated? Is that in both languages? If it is, the minister will have our agreement despite our extreme misgivings and our finding it inadmissible that a government would not respect the Constitution. However, because so many expectations have been placed on this, we will agree to it. However, if it has not been translated, the answer is no.

● (1515)

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, I will read what I said for my friend, who I know to be a reasonable person. I said, “Given the high volume and the importance of providing these quickly to Parliament and to the public, I am seeking unanimous consent to table untranslated documents”.

At no time did I speak to the price. The member opposite pretended to quote me in the speech I just made. It is right there.

[Translation]

I can confirm to the hon. member that the report of the panel of arbiters dated June 15 was in both official languages.

[English]

The Speaker: I do not think there needs to be a debate about other aspects of it. The minister has asked for unanimous consent to table the documents. I do not see any other points of order that can be raised.

Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table the documents?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2010 annual report of the RCMP's use of the law enforcement justification provision.

This report addresses the RCMP's use of specified provisions within the law enforcement justification regime which is set out in sections 25.1 to 25.4 of the Criminal Code of Canada. This report also documents the nature of the investigations in which these provisions were used.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation to the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association concerning its participation in the standing committee meeting held in Montreal, Quebec, from May 3 to 5, 2011.

[English]

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the following reports of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting its participation in three conferences: First, the Canadian/American Border Trade Alliance Conference held in Washington, D.C., September 21, 2010; second, the Council of State Governments Annual Conference which was held in Providence, Rhode Island, December 3-6, 2010; and third, the Canadian/American Border Trade Alliance Conference held here in Ottawa, May 1-3, 2011.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in relation to Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mega-trials).

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

* * *

FAIR AND EFFICIENT CRIMINAL TRIALS ACT

(Bill C-2. On the Order: Government Orders.)

June 22, 2011—Report stage of Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mega-trials)—the Minister of Justice.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, June 16, Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mega-trials), is deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

(Bill concurred in, read the third time and passed)

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HEALTH

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Health entitled “Review of Proposed Tobacco Regulations”.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in this report later this day.

* * *

• (1520)

[Translation]

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-246, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (hearing impairment).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Montcalm, who is seconding this bill. He is one of the strongest advocates in this House when it comes to the rights of persons with disabilities.

[English]

The bill would establish equality for hard of hearing and deafened Canadians. With the disability tax credit currently many hard of hearing and deafened Canadians are not able to access tax credits because the tax credit regulations basically force the person to be in an ideal situation in order not to hear.

What the bill purports to do would be to put in place a system where, in a real working life, somebody who is hard of hearing or deafened is unable to hear, would then be able to access this credit.

The bill is endorsed by the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, Voice for Hearing Impaired Children, the Canadian Association of Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists and the Canadian Academy of Audiology. All of those organizations urge all members of the House to support the bill so that we can get equality for deafened and hard of hearing Canadians.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

SERVICE CANADA MANDATE EXPANSION ACT

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-247, An Act to expand the mandate of Service Canada in respect of the death of a Canadian citizen or Canadian resident.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill, seconded by the member for Markham—Unionville, to expand the mandate of

Routine Proceedings

Service Canada in respect of the death of a Canadian citizen or Canadian resident.

The bill requires the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development to establish Service Canada as the single point of contact for the Government of Canada for matters relating to the death of a Canadian citizen or Canadian resident when cancelling social insurance numbers, passports and dealing with pensions and tax records for example.

The current system is far too cumbersome for those who have lost their loved ones and a new single point of contact system would save the government money by consolidating the agencies responsible for conducting this administration.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

EMERGENCY SERVICES APPRECIATION DAY ACT

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-248, An Act respecting an Emergency Services Appreciation Day.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Welland for being the seconder on the bill.

This bill, An Act respecting an Emergency Services Appreciation Day, would legislate that every third Saturday in July be known as emergency services appreciation day all across Canada.

The bill supports and recognizes the work done by police, firefighters and paramedics, and truly, every time we are on our way out of an emergency situation, they are on their way in. This day is our way of saying thanks for the great work that our emergency services personnel do right across our great country.

I hope everyone will support the bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

EXCISE TAX ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-249, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (no GST on the sale of home heating fuels).

He said: Mr. Speaker, when Mr. Mulroney was the Conservative prime minister, he introduced a draconian tax that taxed people's home heating essentials, from wood to oil to gas to everything else.

As members know all too well, the cost of fuel is very expensive. Adding a tax on top of that is a tremendous burden on citizens in this country.

In Nova Scotia, the government removed the PST portion of the HST on home heating fuels. There is absolutely no reason why the government cannot give Canadians a break and remove the federal tax off home heating essentials in this country.

That is what this bill purports to do. We would like to give families and businesses across this country a break. We would hope that the Conservatives would understand the importance of this legislation and help us pass it as soon as possible.

Routine Proceedings

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

● (1525)

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-250, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (herbal remedies).

He said: Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals were in power, they imposed a tax on herbal remedies that a lot of Canadians use.

My wife, for example, is allergic to sulfa-based drugs and cannot use 90% of prescriptions that are on the market. She uses herbal remedies, subscribed by a naturopath in some cases, and yet those particular herbal remedies are not available for tax exemption. If people without a medical plan have a prescription, they can claim it on their income tax return. However, if people use remedies like St. John's Wort, et cetera, they are not entitled to claim that as a medical expense.

I believe, as do many Canadians who use natural products to heal themselves, that they should be able to claim that as a tax deduction.

Again I am hoping that the Conservatives, who like tax cuts, will support this initiative in order to support the millions of Canadians who do not use sulfa-based drugs but use alternatives for their remedies.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

EXCISE TAX ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-251, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (no GST on reading materials).

He said: Mr. Speaker, any time we look at this country, there are about 20% to 25% of Canadians, in both official languages, who are functionally illiterate. A lot of people cannot even afford to buy basic reading materials such as newspapers, books, magazines, et cetera.

However, to charge a tax on reading materials when we are trying to encourage more and more Canadians to actually read is simply wrong.

I have this legislation, like the other two, to encourage my Conservative colleagues, who like to talk about tax cuts, to quickly adopt this legislation and remove taxation from all reading and educational materials.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-252, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (physical activity and amateur sport fees).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is a bill that I have been working on since about 1998. I am proud to admit that our provincial government and the federal government have adopted the bill in a

very small way, allowing a small aspect of a tax credit for children under 16 who are involved in physical activities.

Our bill goes a lot further than that. If a person is a member of Nubody's, for example, or a gym and pays \$300 to \$400 a year or a month or whatever for that membership, I believe that membership should be tax deductible.

If people are members of a hockey team, a basketball team, a dance club or anything that gives them physical activity for which they need a membership, I believe the fees for that membership should be tax deductible, and not at 15%, but at the full amount, because that would encourage more and more Canadians to become physically active and would allow more Canadians to put, and I know the Conservatives love to hear this, more money in their pocket so they can spend on other aspects of their lives.

If we want to reduce health care costs and encourage greater community living, we need to get more Canadians physically active by allowing them to have a tax deduction on the fees that they pay for gym memberships, et cetera.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

● (1530)

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. The purpose of the motion is to move the time of the vote tonight on estimates from 10 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., something that has been done on occasion in the past.

[Translation]

I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, during the consideration of the Business of Supply on the last allotted day in the supply period ending June 23, 2011, at 6:30 p.m. the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith, without further debate or amendment, every question necessary to dispose of the opposition motion and forthwith thereafter put successively, without debate or amendment, every question necessary to dispose of the motion or motions to concur in the Main Estimates and Supplementary Estimates (A), and, notwithstanding Standing Order 71, for the passage at all stages of any bill or bills based on the main or supplementary estimates.

[English]

The Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity, as we approach the end of this parliamentary session, to thank our House of Commons pages who have served us so well. They do so in an honourable, non-partisan fashion. The expression is “They’re supposed to be a part of the furniture”, but they are certainly much more than that. They help run our daily operations on a very smooth basis.

I want to thank all the pages for the hard work they have undertaken this year. I think I speak for all members on all sides of the House when I say it is a pleasure to be surrounded by bright young people who have such a keen interest in serving their country and in serving us in the House of Commons.

I hope, as this year wraps up, they will look back on it as an historic and interesting year with many fond memories. Some members have heard me say it before that my own wife was a page. She always says that it was the best year of her life, thus far at least. Many other pages have expressed the exact same sentiment.

This is an historic Parliament for another reason. Although the page program has existed for many years, in this 41st Parliament it is the first time I believe we have had pages who have actually been elected to become members of Parliament. There are two former pages who sit among us as members of Parliament.

I want to thank them and wish them the very best. My thanks for their work this year. I wish them all the best success in the future.

Some hon. members: Hear! Hear!

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I offer the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be dispensed from presenting a second report pursuant to Standing Order 104(1) within the first ten sitting days after the second Monday following Labour Day 2011; and that the chair and the two vice-chairs of each standing or standing joint committee elected at the commencement of the session retain their functions.

The Speaker: Does the hon. chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

HEALTH

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the first report of the Standing

Points of Order

Committee on Health presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in. This report concerns the proposed tobacco regulations.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent for the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

COMMENTS BY THE MEMBER FOR TRINITY—SPADINA

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Yesterday, during debate on Bill C-4, the member for Trinity—Spadina said, in reference to the passengers of the SS *St. Louis*, in 1939, “They came without a lot of documentation and arrived on the shore of Halifax and Canada sent them away”.

This is an attempt to revise historical fact, as the passengers on the *St. Louis* had full documentation, including passports issued by the government of Nazi Germany stamped with a large *j* on them, plus entry visas for Cuba. However, Cuba turned them away due to the *j* on their passports.

The member for Trinity—Spadina owes the House, Holocaust survivors and the memory of the six million an apology for these unfounded spurious remarks.

What the minister is proposing in Bill C-4 is a process to determine whether undocumented people arriving on Canadian shores are bona fide refugees or not.

The 300 men and 650 women and children on the SS *St. Louis* were turned away, not because of lack of documentation, but because their documentation identified them as Jews.

As a child of a Holocaust survivor, I am appalled at her attempt to revise history and denigrate the memory of those who perished in the gas chambers at Auschwitz and the memory of the six million Jews who died at the hands of the Nazis to the boatloads of migrants recently arriving on Canadian shores with no or questionable documentation.

I call on the member for Trinity—Spadina to stand in her place today and take this opportunity to apologize.

• (1535)

The Speaker: I believe this issue was raised yesterday and it was ruled to be a point of debate. I see no reason that this has changed from yesterday to today.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, the comments that the member is making is an attempt to take something that is one of the great profound tragedies of our history, what happened to those who came looking for sanctuary and who were turned away, and use it to smear another member of the House. That is a very serious thing, and I do not think it should be allowed to stand.

Points of Order

What the member spoke about was how some people who came to our country were not given the full right as citizens, people who came to our shores looking for help, who were turned away and who later died. This is not an attempt, in any way, to denigrate the horror of the Holocaust.

When the member for Trinity—Spadina speaks of this, and we see people coming out of war zones who are in desperate situations and who do not have proper documentation who may be turned away, this is a legitimate matter for debate. However, it is certainly not acceptable in the House to attempt to paint a member of this chamber as somehow denigrating the Holocaust.

I would ask the member to put those issues aside and debate issues as they are and not attempt to trash people's reputation in such a spurious manner.

The Speaker: As I said, it is a point of debate, not a point of order.

* * *

PETITIONS

ASBESTOS

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of presenting a petition today that calls on the House of Commons to ban asbestos in all its forms and issue a just transition program for asbestos workers and the communities in which they work.

Asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known. It is banned for use in our country, yet Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos. It is more than ironic, indeed, I would suggest unconscionable, that we are taking asbestos out of Parliament buildings because of its deadly nature and yet we continue to export asbestos to other countries in the world.

To boot, as the petitioners rightly point out, Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry, which the signators refer to as "corporate welfare for corporate serial killers".

It is time Canada started acting with integrity on this issue.

The petitioners conclude by calling upon the government to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

I know that the rules of the House do not allow me to endorse this petition, but let me conclude by saying that, for the very first time, I find myself agreeing with former Conservative cabinet minister Chuck Strahl, who is now joining the chorus of Canadians urging the Prime Minister to move on chrysotile asbestos.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to bring forth a petition to the House of Commons to condemn the illegal persecution of Falun Gong by the Chinese communist regime.

The petition, signed by Canadians, looks to help rescue the family members of Canadians who are incarcerated simply for their belief in Falun Gong in China: Liz-Hong He, Yu Yao, Ming-li Lin, Yun-he Zhang, Feng-jiang Tan, Ge-hong Yu, Ge-key-ang Han, Ying Zhang,

Yan-hua Ge, Shen-lun Wang and Yu-shu Zhen. All are family members of Canadians who are serving jail times of up to 12 years simply for their belief in Falun Gong.

Many organizations, such as the UN committee against torture, have shown concern that Falun Gong practitioners en masse have been slaughtered for their vital organs.

• (1540)

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present a petition that I would prefer not to have to present. If the government decided to keep the Maritime sub-centre open in St. John's, Newfoundland, then this petition would be unnecessary. However, I will read the petition to point out how important it is to keep this facility open.

It states that the federal government is responsible for providing adequate and appropriate search and rescue operations to oversee the safety of seafarers off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador; that the closure of the St. John's Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre would put into increased peril the safety of said seafarers; that an intimate knowledge of the Newfoundland and Labrador coastline is instrumental in assuring a quick response time when a situation arises; that the staff of St. John's Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre possesses the expertise and knowledge of our waters needed to adequately and appropriately serve our seafarers; and that the safety of our citizens should override fiscal priorities.

Therefore, the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to instruct the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to maintain a staffed Maritime rescue sub-centre in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador and to ensure that services offered at this sub-centre are not reduced in nature or scope.

The seriousness of this situation cannot be underscored. It is important that the government reconsider its decision and keeps this centre open.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the very first events I attended as a member of Parliament was a Mother's Day event put on by the South Asian Women's Rights Organization. It should have been an event of happiness and celebration, but it was an event of many tears and much frustration owing to the unreasonable delays in the processing times of immigration applications to reunite families of new Canadians.

The women at this event asked that I introduce into the House a petition. The petition requests that the House ensures that Citizenship and Immigration Canada addresses the imbalance of the parents and grandparents immigration processing times and makes global service standards equitable.

I am honoured to so present this petition.

HEALTH

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition that was put together in conjunction with the Relay for Life. This petition is from a group of people in eastern Prince Edward Island who are with the Cancer Society. They are very concerned about the cost of drugs and have asked me to present this petition to the House.

The participants of the Relay for Life 2011 know that the financial burden of the care and treatment can be significant for those fighting cancer and their families.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the government to implement a catastrophic drug program that would improve access to necessary medication for all Islanders.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have several petitions to present today. The first two petitions are signed by hundreds of constituents from my riding and right across British Columbia.

The first petition calls for a ban on supertanker traffic on British Columbia's north coast. It explicitly names the Enbridge gateway project as a threat to our economy, our culture and very way of life.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, the second petition is signed by dozens of my constituents.

The petitioners call upon the government to not only follow-up on the apology that was made to first nations for the abuses that took place at residential schools, but to redistribute the funds for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

These constituents find it an utter hypocrisy that the government on one hand would apologize for past mistakes, but then continue those mistakes by not supporting the good work of groups like the Aboriginal healing Foundation.

• (1545)

ASBESTOS

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, the last petition is quite timely. Today Canada shamefully took its place on the world stage refusing the consensus to list chrysotile asbestos as a dangerous substance in the international convention.

Petitioners from across Canada call for an outright ban of the export of this most dangerous element as it is the world's leading industrial killer. It is a known cause of cancer for many years now. Yet the Conservative government somehow feels comfortable being utterly complicit in the support and promotion of asbestos around the world.

Finally, today in Copenhagen, India came on board and said that asbestos must be listed as a dangerous substance, and these petitioners back that up.

GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, at the time we are winding down and the budget is going

Speaker's Ruling

through the final process, the petition that I bring forward is from signatories asking for the government to recognize that the amount of supplement given under the GIS just is not enough to cover the costs of seniors.

They are calling on the government to recognize the need to give more to our seniors through the GIS. It is with pleasure that I table this petition today.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Madam Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

The Deputy Speaker: Today being the last allotted day for the supply period ending June 23, 2011, the House will proceed as usual to the consideration and passage of the appropriation bills. In view of recent procedures, do hon. members agree to have the bills distributed now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: I am now prepared to give a ruling on a point of order raised yesterday by the hon. member for Toronto Centre regarding a statement made by the Minister of Public Safety in the course of debate on Bill C-4.

When the point of order was raised, I undertook to review the transcript and, if necessary, return to the House with a ruling on that matter. Having done so, the Chair finds that the words used by the minister were unparliamentary.

However, the Chair notes that the minister did rise to clarify his remarks, stating that he "certainly did not mean any intention to commit a criminal offence by this member or any other member". Given this clarification by the minister, the Chair is prepared to take him at his word and consider the matter closed.

However, let me take this opportunity, in these early days of the 41st Parliament, to remind the minister and all members that this kind of statement will not be tolerated.

I enjoin all members to avoid all statements that impute unworthy motives to members.

*Business of Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***BUSINESS OF SUPPLY****OPPOSITION MOTION—SMALL BUSINESSES**

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize the important role Canadian small businesses play in creating employment in their communities by lowering the small business income tax rate in order to encourage job creation.

He said: Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

I welcome the opportunity to speak to this important NDP motion, to reduce the income taxes of millions of small businesses across Canada.

This is the first time that I am giving a speech in the House since the election, so before I speak to our motion, I would be remiss if I did not thank some of the many people who helped me to represent my constituents in this place again.

I would like to thank many people from mayors to businesspeople, seniors, students, teachers, nurses, families, and all the ones who came out to my town hall meetings, who met me over coffee, and who spoke with me at their doorstep. Without their input and their support, I would not be here to work for them.

I want to express my thanks to my campaign team, led by a very talented and experienced Chris Mockler, and the hundreds of tireless volunteers who gave so much of their time and energy to make democracy work.

I also owe a debt to my dedicated office staff, in both Ottawa and Thunder Bay—Superior North, whose tireless work helped thousands of constituents over the past several years. That has made a real difference in those people's lives.

As everyone knows in this House, many of our families have to make real sacrifices in order to allow us as MPs to represent our constituents here. So deep thanks go to my wife, Margaret, and my son, Michael, for their understanding and support over the years.

Most of all, I would like to let the constituents of my big, beautiful riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North know that it is a huge honour for me to represent them once again here in this place. All of them, no matter how they voted. I accept that honour with humility, and I will do my very best to serve them faithfully.

Today's motion is about recognizing how vital small businesses are to communities across our country of Canada. It is about how they play an important role in creating jobs for millions for people. It is about supporting them to grow and to generate more employment by cutting their small business income taxes, so they can reinvest in their businesses to help them to grow and reinvest right here in Canada and right in their own communities, in our own communities.

Small and medium-sized businesses already employ 56% of all workers in Canada. That is close to eight million Canadians. Small

businesses are very resilient when times get tough. They do not downsize their workforce as much in recessions.

For example, in the five quarters of the recent downturn, the private sector lost close to half a million jobs. Of those, large firms let go about 6% of their payroll employment, while small businesses lost only about 2%. One reason is they cannot just shut down a branch plant in Canada and retrench in their home country. This is their home country.

So it makes sense to support more nimble small businesses if we want to encourage sustainable employment growth. It also makes sense from a community investment perspective. The funds that small businesses save in taxes are largely invested, saved, and consumed locally because small businesses spend locally. They do not ship their jobs or profits overseas because they are based right here in our communities.

Eighty per cent of small businesses earn less than \$100,000 a year. Their profits do not go toward padding CEO bonuses or being invested outside of Canada. In fact, a report to be released next month by the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses will show that successful small businesses that grew during the last recession prefer reinvesting any windfall in their businesses and in hiring more Canadians.

Members will know that New Democrats are no strangers to supporting small businesses. The NDP government in Manitoba has cut small business income taxes in that province, reducing it over time when it was affordable to do so. Last year, they dropped the tax rate to zero, eliminating small business income taxes completely.

During the federal election, my party had a platform that called for a reduction in small business taxes. We also called for a job creation tax credit that would give up to \$4,500 to businesses for each new employee.

• (1550)

However, in the government's recent budget there is no tax reduction for small businesses. In fact, this budget was a huge missed opportunity to support small businesses here in Canada. I have noticed that many members on the other side of the House have been crowing about a hiring tax credit in the budget. If we look at this credit closely, we will see that small businesses will be no further ahead with it than before. It is a temporary measure that will only exist for one year. All it does is defray the increases in EI premiums that businesses have to pay, starting this year.

The government is hiking EI premiums for everyone and then introducing a small credit to delay this payroll tax hike for a year. It is crowing about this like it is some great help for small businesses. As a small-business owner myself with a payroll to meet, I know that giving with one hand and taking with another really is not any help at all. However, far worse, these increased employment insurance premiums will make it more expensive to hire people after this year. It is especially outrageous considering the premium hike is so unnecessary.

Business of Supply

The government still owes the \$57 billion it raided from the EI fund. That is money that workers and employers have already paid and now they are being told to pay it twice. This payroll tax increase is expected to result in a \$15 billion surplus in the EI fund over the next five years. Therefore, is this really necessary?

Until now, the government has been focused on helping its friends in the banking and oil company industries to reap record profits through blanket tax handouts that make our large corporate tax rate less than half of that in the United States of America. There is still \$1.4 billion in tax subsidies going to the oil and gas sector every year, when it obviously does not need it.

Further, blanket tax handouts without conditions for investment do not help create jobs here in Canada. They might generate fat CEO bonuses or investment outside of Canada, but there is simply no evidence that they generate employment here. Instead of spending billions on ineffective policies, we need to be more selective in how we use our precious taxpayer dollars. We need more targeted investments that will result in real job creation.

The government must start supporting small businesses with more than gimmicks that camouflage tax increases. A tax cut for the local retailer down the street, the mom and pop store on the corner, or the start-up in the garage next door will help those small businesses re-invest in their communities and our communities, and create local employment.

New Democrats are trying to change the direction the government has been taking. We are trying to lead it to the light about how important small businesses are to our economy, now and in the future, and we are trying to get more value for taxpayers' money than wasting it on ineffective, across-the-board tax handouts without criteria for success.

I appeal to all the parties in this House to support today's New Democrat motion to cut small-business taxes here in Canada.

• (1555)

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad to see that the hon. member has now become such a champion of small businesses and he talked about the small businesses, such as mom and pop-type businesses and small retailers. I happen to come from a small-business background and I know the challenges that a business has.

Is the hon. member aware that there is a threshold at which a small-business does not have to pay any federal tax? I am not sure that the NDP members understand that.

As well, I am interested in whether the hon. member knows what this government has done in terms of the employment insurance system to ensure that it becomes accountable and self-funded. He mentioned the surplus that had been built up in previous times when the former government had built it up and used that money for other purposes.

I would be interested to hear what the hon. member has to say. I am delighted that he has now come around to support small businesses which are really the backbone of the economy here in Canada.

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Those were very encouraging comments, Madam Speaker, and I appreciate them.

There was a previous party and government that raided \$57 billion from the EI fund, but given the opportunity to correct that egregious and, according to the Supreme Court of Canada, illegal activity, that government chose not to make financial amends to that fund and has, in the last budget and this budget, increased EI premiums for small and large businesses and for the workers themselves. That is a job killer, if there ever were one.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we in the Liberal Party recognize that the small businesses of Canada are the backbone of our economy, and when we look to the future we are looking to small businesses to continue to bring us into the world economy in new and wonderful ways.

The member seemed to have endorsed the NDP in Manitoba. I do not know if the member is aware, but the NDP government of Manitoba also has a payroll tax. It also gave significant corporate tax cuts, which seem to be in a contradiction to the federal wing of the party

Maybe the member could comment on whether or not he endorses all of the business tax breaks that have been given, and would he encourage the NDP in Manitoba to get rid of the payroll tax currently there?

• (1600)

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Madam Speaker, I cannot comment on the payroll tax. I am not familiar with the details of it but would be happy to look into it and comment to the member later.

I do not agree with the large corporate tax cuts given in Manitoba, but when I have spoken to members of the Manitoba legislature I have found that they are in agreement that it has been a huge job creator, a huge stimulus to employment and the economy, and that they have recouped their lost income to small businesses from the increases in taxes in other areas gained from increased economic growth.

The cut in taxes that really concerns me and that should concern us as federal members is the fact that for some bizarre reason our corporate tax rate is less than half the tax rate for large corporations in the United States. It is approximately 36% in the United States and soon to be 15% in Canada. I can see it being a few percentage points lower to be competitive, but my goodness, why is it less than half the U.S. rate?

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, as it is the first time I am speaking in the House, I would like to thank the voters of Edmonton—Strathcona for electing me. I am raising attention to that because there are many small businesses in my riding who have been fighting to get the federal government to support them in building their energy efficiency small businesses.

I would like to clarify for the record that the hon. member has long been a spokesperson for small business in this House. It is not a new interest that he is raising, and he is the appropriate person to raise the matter.

Business of Supply

As the member has also spoken about that area of enterprise, I wonder if he thinks it is appropriate for us to also get the government to support the continuity of the energy efficiency sector, including reducing its taxes.

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for raising the issue of investing in industries, large or small, that will lead to conservation and new directions in energy production in Canada. We know it is time to shift from yesterday's technologies and yesterday's energy sources to conservation and new sustainable forms of energy.

I feel confident that NDP members will be proposing many suggestions, and the hon. member, I am sure, will be among them.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak in favour of my colleague's motion today. First, I would like to thank my constituents in Beauport—Limoilou for their support on May 2. I am proud to represent them in this House and I am well aware of the responsibility that I have been given.

I would also like to pay tribute to my leader, because this victory in Beauport—Limoilou was also his victory. Since our first meeting in Cap-Rouge, in the summer of 2005, I have had the pleasure of working with my friend to build a better future for our families. We have compared our visions of society and agree on the Canada we want. I sincerely appreciate the privilege of having his attention to present my ideas for moving our society forward.

My leader has placed a great deal of trust in me by offering me the position of official opposition critic for small business and tourism. I am honoured and will honour that trust.

Small businesses are the foundation of our local economies. They are part of our everyday lives. The owners of these businesses are our neighbours, our loved ones. They employ our family members, friends and fellow citizens.

Our entrepreneurs have the same concerns as our workers. They want a place in society; they want to earn an honest living and be able to pass something worthwhile on to their descendants, a legacy that makes them proud.

To reach that goal, our entrepreneurs need optimal, competitive conditions. They must be able to rely on strong social programs when it comes to health care and pensions so that they and their employees are protected from twists of fate. They must be on a level playing field with larger competitors, foreign competitors who benefit from cheap labour and a lack of basic services in health care, education and public safety, which Canadians enjoy.

We need to ensure that they have the means to develop and offer their clients, all of us, the best product and the best service.

Our entrepreneurs are the people like the baker whom I buy my bread from, just steps away from my house in Limoilou. Or my three barbers, whom I have been going to for years and who know me by name; the owner of the restaurant on the corner where I go to eat because my workload forces me to grab something and I get service with a smile; or the independent owner of the convenience store

where I go to buy beer and other treats, who takes the time to say hello and chat about my life.

And I have not even mentioned the pharmacist, the independent gas station owner, or the cleaner on the corner who takes care of my everyday needs. None of these honest business owners, none of these entrepreneurs, benefit from the very generous tax measures that this government is doling out to the big banks and oil companies, whose profits are mind-boggling.

It gets worse. In an article in the *Globe and Mail* on April 6, journalist Karen Howlett demonstrated that the massive tax cuts for big business did not prevent a significant drop in investment in machinery and equipment. In reality, these businesses built up \$83 billion in additional reserves, money that has been sitting outside our country since 2008, the start of the recession.

In the meantime, family businesses and workers are suffering because of the economic slowdown. They are constrained by financial decisions that do not concern them. In the past few years, we have come to understand that the financial economy has been given disproportionate weight compared to the real economy, that of our industries, services, agricultural production and households.

This disproportion is seen in part in the recent sudden downside in the S&P/TSX index, which has fallen by 10% since the beginning of 2011.

● (1605)

Everyone is paying the price right now, because the performance requirements of companies listed on the stock exchange are disproportionate to their real and tangible activities. Even when they are profitable, companies listed on the stock exchange have to “restructure”, in other words, make sweeping layoffs of their employees, the lifeblood of a company, with no good reason. Publicly traded companies have to record huge profits and pay large dividends to their shareholders. I am not talking about the obscene bonuses paid to senior executives, which goes against all performance logic and against the needs of the very company involved.

What will this government do? It will feed the tyrannical performance monster I just described at all costs by making massive tax cuts that will do nothing for the family businesses that are part of our daily lives.

The Conservative government is contributing to the economic instability that is hurting us all right now. The Toronto Stock Exchange will look even more like a roller coaster with the measures contained in this budget. There will be more grief because of the fluctuating markets and the fluctuating prices of gas and daily essentials, and we will see more job losses in many regions in Canada.

We have a job creation plan that was rolled out during the last election campaign. We want to reduce the tax rate on a company's first \$500,000 of net income from 11% to 9%, which would make a huge difference to millions of small business owners and their employees. This measure would give family businesses more room to manoeuvre, which would in turn ensure their survival and continued development.

In addition, we are proposing a job creation tax credit of up to \$4,500, a measure that could create 200,000 jobs. Our entrepreneurs would benefit from a reduction in Canada pension plan and employment insurance premiums for new hires, a great help in these difficult times for many sectors of economic activity, with the exception of oil development and banking, of course.

How does this government intend to create jobs? Through massive tax cuts that will not create jobs in big businesses, but will lead to greater economic instability that will hurt all Canadians. This government boasts that it has created 540,000 jobs since July 2009, mostly temporary and part-time jobs. During that same period, the Canadian population increased by 700,000 to 800,000. It would have been shameful had fewer jobs been created, given that a large number of quality jobs have been lost and businesses have closed since 2008.

This government could do much more by agreeing to implement a real job creation plan, one that would support family businesses that are part of our daily lives, a plan that would create 200,000 stable, good-quality jobs for Canadians.

We need this plan.

• (1610)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague.

The issue between the New Democratic vision of a functioning economy and the neo-con agenda of the Conservative Party is that we understand that if someone is going to run a business, money has to be coming in, which are taxes, and money has to be put out in investments to ensure the business. The Conservative government does not want to make the investments in the key areas. However, the Conservatives government is certainly planning on giving massive corporate tax cuts across the board that serve no useful purpose.

In Ontario, for example, from the switch in taxes, the average citizen now has to pay the share that the banks should be paying and is now paying as a result an extra \$800 million a year at the gas pumps from the HST, and yet the banks in Canada enjoyed over \$1 billion in tax breaks. How many jobs did those bankers create? Probably zero, because we see them shutting down banks across the country.

It is by shifting tax breaks to where people create jobs that an economy is built.

If the Conservatives are just giving money to the richest companies, which are shipping them overseas and from which we are not getting any return, what does my colleague think the return would be if tax incentives were actually targeted toward the small- and medium-size businesses that are actually investing in communities and creating jobs?

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for this question.

If we really invest in small business, we will have much greater stability in terms of employment for all our constituents.

Business of Supply

The phenomenon of employment in small business can be described as follows. In general, we see that, proportionately, approximately two to three times fewer jobs are lost in small companies during a recession than in much larger companies.

As a result, investing in small business is basically like buying insurance for the future for all our workers and for our communities.

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Madam Speaker, I must admit that, this afternoon, I have been completely amazed to hear the NDP members recommending that we lower taxes for businesses, specifically small businesses, when this same party has been voting against our budget proposals regarding small businesses since we were elected in 2006.

I would just like to remind the member of the opposition of our proposals to reduce the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%, increase the small business earnings limit from \$300,000 to \$500,000, and increase the lifetime maximum capital gains exemption for small business from \$500,000 to \$750,000. During those years, the NDP voted against these proposals.

How is it that today the NDP has seen the beauty of capitalism, the beauty of a system that creates jobs? I would like to know where this new-found desire to finally promote free enterprise came from. I am very happy to see their proposal. I would like to tell him that the Conservatives will vote in favour of his party's motion but I would like to know where this idea in favour of small business came from.

• (1615)

Mr. Raymond Côté: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his comment and for his support of the motion. It is very nice to hear.

We have long been interested in helping families and local economic activity. However, using previous budgets as examples, I think my speech gave a clear picture of the devastating effects of tax cuts as well as abuses by big corporations and their shareholders and what that has meant for Canadians.

We absolutely could not approve measures that we could see would have harmful consequences, despite the few little measures that were proposed and buried in the budgets.

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to the motion moved by my NDP colleagues concerning the taxation of small businesses in Canada.

Everyone knows that I come from a region that promotes entrepreneurship. I am very proud to represent the people of Beauce. Beauce is a haven for SMEs. At one time, the people there were called the Japanese of Quebec because they are entrepreneurs who do not wait for government help to create wealth. They are resourceful and independent and like to take calculated risks.

Business of Supply

I feel very comfortable voting in favour of the motion before us today because it reflects the position of our government as well. As I was saying earlier, over the last few years, our government has always supported small businesses and small business owners, since we know that they create wealth and drive the economy. A big, intrusive government will not create wealth, as the NDP likes to say during election campaigns and even here in the House, always proposing state involvement in response to a problem in society, either through regulations on individuals or businesses or an increase in their costs. We promote economic freedom and entrepreneurship. That is what creates jobs.

That is the best recipe. If we look at the past, we can see that that is the only recipe that has produced results. Canada came out better than all the G7 countries during the latest global economic crisis, which, I must point out, originated in the United States. Canada did not create this global crisis. It originated in the United States with the subprime mortgage crisis, as members will recall. This snowballed and affected Canada, Europe and many other countries in the world. Canada was the last to enter this economic crisis and the first to emerge. Why? Because we have adopted policies that enable creators of wealth to do what they do best, which is to create wealth.

I can say that the economic indicators are positive today, but they are also uncertain. There is a problem in Europe, with the debt of various European countries that favoured socialist measures, government measures, requiring heavy government spending. In the end, it hurt the creation of wealth in their countries. We see that the global recovery is tentative. We must continue to reduce business taxes, create wealth and ensure that there is greater freedom. When I speak of freedom, I am referring to individual and economic freedom. Politicians do not create jobs. I would like to repeat that because sometimes the people here believe that we create jobs. We depend on entrepreneurs. They pay our salaries and we should remember that. The real creators of wealth are the people who work day and night, who work continually to ensure that their families have the necessary comforts of life. They are big business owners as well as small business owners.

I do not like the fact that my opposition colleagues make a distinction between small and big business. The NDP's economic policy contains contradictions. This afternoon, the NDP is promoting tax cuts for small business, but it is also promoting tax hikes for big business. If the economic logic applies to the creation of wealth by small business, then the same economic logic should apply to big business. There is a blatant contradiction in what the NDP is saying, and I invite my colleagues to examine other countries' economic policies for creating wealth. That is what ensures that countries do better.

With our emergence from the economic crisis and through the efforts of all Canadians, 368,000 jobs were created in 2010. Canada has one of the best results of all the G7 countries. However, we must continue to promote entrepreneurship. For that reason we created and put in place various measures in this budget, including an important measure to balance the budget and thus ensure that Canadians live within their means and that entrepreneurs can continue to create wealth.

• (1620)

But I would like to take a few minutes to explain corporate income tax. I think that many people here probably do not realize that taxing a company means taxing individuals and Canadians. A business is simply a collection of contracts. Businesses enter into contracts with their clients and their managers, as well as employment contracts with their employees, as the NDP members well know, since they like to defend only the one side. Thus, a business is a fiscal invention. It is a cluster of contracts that have been negotiated with employers, clients and investors.

For the business owner, taxes add to the cost of wealth creation. When a small business or large corporation is taxed, that puts an additional burden on the company, and this prevents it from creating wealth and the necessary jobs. What is important to understand is that this burden is always passed on to individuals, because the business, in a capitalist system, must be profitable. Profitability is a good thing, and I am not afraid to say that businesses should make as much profit as they can, because that profit can be reinvested in wage increases for their employees, in equipment to increase productivity and in the creation of new products. Profit is a good thing in a capitalist system, and I do not understand how the people in the NDP can be against the profits made by a small or large business owner.

When a business is taxed, this imposes an additional cost on the business owner and that cost must be passed on to real individuals. Ordinary people are the ones who pay the price. The cost is passed on to consumers, because it increases the retail price of the product, and this becomes a sort of consumption tax. So when a business is taxed, this becomes a consumption tax when the business passes the cost on to the consumer. The business can also pass it on to investors, the owners of the business, and then it becomes a tax on capital, and at the end of the day, it is the business owner, the investor, who pays the tax. The business can also pass it on to the workers, whom the NDP claims to defend. Workers are also taxed when a business is taxed. This cost is passed on to the workers, who then get a lower wage increase and therefore have less wealth.

Depending on the competitive environment the company works in, it will transfer this cost one of those three ways and at the end of the day, Canadians will pay this tax. There is therefore no distinction between corporate tax and individual tax. It is a false distinction. Everyday Canadians are the ones who pay taxes. Corporations do not pay taxes. They transfer them to consumers. We are all consumers. They transfer them to workers. We are all workers. They transfer them to investors. We are all investors through the shares we hold in our pension funds.

We are the ones who always pay taxes. When the NDP wants to increase corporate taxes, it does not tell Canadians it wants to indirectly increase individual taxes. Taxing corporations indirectly taxes individuals, and that is why we have to continue down this path. That is the mandate the Canadian public gave us. We campaigned on cutting corporate taxes from 16.5% to 15%. The NDP argued in favour of increasing corporate taxes to 19%. It argued against the workers it claims to defend, consumers and small business owners.

It is worrisome to see the NDP's economic logic. It worries me to see the opposition MPs have such a biased economic logic and no understanding of basic economics. Everything I was just talking about is taught in first-year university courses. That is what economics is all about.

• (1625)

The economy is individuals. When we seek to control the economy, we seek to control the actions of individuals. That is why our party advocates for personal freedom. We believe that individuals, people, the public, Canadians know better than we do what is good for them. We believe that they should be able to keep their money in their pockets since they are the ones who will create wealth.

Have members ever seen a scandal in a company that creates wealth? Scandals stem from big-spending governments. If we look at the history of Canada, the Liberals bequeathed us a long list of scandals by wanting to regulate everything and spend freely.

I think that we need to have confidence in entrepreneurs. They are the ones who create wealth. That is why I and all of my colleagues feel very comfortable today standing up for entrepreneurs because, when all is said and done, we are standing up for Canadians.

I also said that taxing businesses means taxing individuals, but it also means putting an additional burden on our businesses because entrepreneurs become tax collectors for the government. While they are collecting taxes to jump through all the administrative hoops imposed on them by the bureaucracy, they are not doing what they should be doing, and that is making their dreams come true, creating wealth and working for themselves. By being self-centred and working for themselves, they are working for society because they are creating wealth and hiring individuals. When we tax businesses, we undermine their creative freedom. We restrict their freedom by asking them to be agents of the state.

I would prefer if entrepreneurs could be true entrepreneurs and focus on what they do best—creating wealth for themselves—because, in the end, this also creates wealth for all of society. The western world's economic and political history has shown that more wealth is generated in the countries with the most economic freedom.

I am pleased to see that my speech has struck my opponents in the NDP, but I do not think I am surprising them. If they can at least think about economic theory tonight, then that will be something. I encourage them to read Bastiat or Hayek and learn about this. Hayek received the Nobel Prize in economic sciences, as members are aware. His peers nominated Hayek for this award. I would like my colleagues to read Hayek and to also read our budget.

Business of Supply

Our government's budget was written by the best finance minister in the G7. We must remember that because of our Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Canada is the best country in the world. Canada is a great country because it believes in individuals and it has a very good budget. A number of measures in this budget are pro-business, and therefore pro-individual and pro-Canadian.

Mr. Yvon Godin: And pro-worker.

Hon. Maxime Bernier: And pro-worker, as my colleague just mentioned. He is right, and he understands the economic logic that applies: we reduce corporate taxes and employees can receive larger wage increases, since we have taken that burden from the entrepreneur.

I was also talking about red tape. I am pleased to announce to opposition members that we have reduced the red tape that the federal bureaucracy imposes on business owners by 20%. That is a start. We can and must do better, but we have reduced it by 20%. That is why I serve on the Red Tape Reduction Commission with my colleagues. We will continue our hearings across Canada, listening to wealth creators and Canadians, to continue to reduce red tape so that they can focus on what they do best: creating wealth.

I urge my colleagues to have a close look at the report of the Red Tape Reduction Commission in November. They will see that we will have some good ideas. They will be the ideas of Canadians. These should be reflected in upcoming budgets, because we are focused on creating wealth in Canada. We must continue to create wealth.

• (1630)

We have done well on this front and we need to keep on. We will continue to reduce the administrative burden imposed on these entrepreneurs because, as I said earlier, they must continue to create wealth. It is not the government that creates wealth. We leave that up to entrepreneurs, and they know how to do it better than we do.

I have a few minutes left to say that I am both pleased and surprised today. I am pleased to see that the NDP is starting to show some concern for entrepreneurs. It is a good first step, and that is why we will encourage them to keep moving in the same direction. However, I am a bit disappointed that they saw the light after they voted against the budget. Still, I am confident that in 2012, with the next budget, they will stay on this new path and will continue to promote entrepreneurs to ensure the creation of wealth in Canada. They will have an opportunity to redeem themselves. At least it is a good start that gives us a glimmer of hope in terms of understanding the NDP's economic logic.

The Liberals have never understood economic logic, but I can see that my NDP colleagues are on the right track. I invite them to read Hayek and Bastiat. They are interesting books that truly reflect reality. It is encouraging. I am very pleased to be here today and speak because I also come from Beauce, a region known for entrepreneurship. I will tell the people of Beauce that, while taking part in a debate here in the House, I saw a glimmer of hope that Mr. Layton's NDP was beginning to understand entrepreneurs. I will take great pleasure in announcing that to the people of Beauce. But still—

Business of Supply

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I must ask the hon. minister to refrain from using the name of a member in this House. The minister has two minutes remaining to complete his speech.

Since he has finished, the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for questions and comments.

• (1635)

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me to ask a question.

It appears that the minister went to the wrong class in university. Instead of taking economics 101, he took wasteful spending 101. It is unbelievable to me that he would even try to tell us, although he really seems to believe, that his government is not an interventionist government. Give me a break. His government's budget just gave mortgage companies a \$300 billion credit. Is that not interventionist? Not only did the minister go to the wrong class, he did not learn anything. This \$300 billion credit did not go to small businesses. And \$300 billion is a lot of money.

Now, regarding the 65 fighter jets, no one knows how much this is going to cost. We are told it will be between \$15 billion and \$30 billion. So the government is handing out a possible \$30 billion without a contract. Not a single small business could hope for even a \$5,000 payment from this government without a contract. But it has no problem giving \$30 billion to big business, no problem at all.

Third, regarding postal services, is that not interventionism? The government is intervening in a labour dispute and the Conservatives are saying they had nothing to do with the lockout scheme that is forcing the employees back to work. They intervened after just three days. It was the same with Air Canada. They intervened, and as a final point, Madam Speaker, regarding the Canadian Wheat Board, which—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I will give the minister a chance to answer the hon. member's questions.

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Madam Speaker, I am in politics for real things, to deal with the facts, and I am pleased to be able to do so today. Further debate on other issues would be necessary because I do not have enough time to explain everything the hon. member has just raised.

He spoke of the Government of Canada's monetary policy. I invite the hon. member to read a very fine speech on monetary policy that was delivered by the hon. member for Beauce a few months ago. This speech will give the hon. member an overview of how well Canada is doing. We have one of the best monetary policies in Canada and I want to thank the Governor of the Bank of Canada and the Minister of Finance—without naming him, and the Speaker will please excuse me for the error I made earlier—for doing such an excellent job. That is why Canada is doing so well.

As far as the fighter jets are concerned, let me reiterate what I said during the election campaign. A request for proposals was indeed issued a few years ago with all the large countries. It was done under the Liberal government and I hope a Liberal MP will rise in the House to confirm that fact. Canada then awarded the contract to the best company. We are working with all our partners on having a fighter jet that meets NATO and United Nations mission criteria.

[English]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all I want to thank my colleague. I have worked with him before on the defence committee. I do not necessarily agree with him on the idea of a tendered contract when it comes to fighter jets, but I will leave that for another time.

The member does tell it like it is, there is no doubt about it. I have heard him say many things in the past that certainly come through as honesty. Maybe he got into a bit of trouble for it, but he certainly was honest and to the point.

However, the member does turn this idea of corporate taxes into an academic exercise that I am not sure I totally agree with. One of the things is comparing the corporate tax to something akin to the GST or a consumption tax. I am not quite sure if that really relates when it comes to all the major exports that we use here.

I would like to zero in on two particular industries. If the corporate tax rates that have fallen over the past two or three years have been so great, why is the forest industry in Quebec having so much trouble? The corporate tax drop did not save my mill. It had to do with a lot of factors outside of that.

If corporate tax rates were so wonderful, why do we give money to auto companies to save them? It is a direct payment to them to save them.

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Madam Speaker, my honourable colleague is right. Forestry is a very competitive industry, governed by supply and demand. In my area, Beauce, there is also a forestry industry. It is struggling because the market has dried up. Beauce business owners exported their lumber to the United States and I imagine that was also the case in the member's riding. The state cannot create a market. Markets dry up and that is a fact. What can the state do when the market in a sector no longer exists? It must continue to decrease corporate taxes so that when the economy does turn around, the businesses can reinvest in equipment and materials or conquer new markets, such as the European or Japanese markets.

Beauce businesses realized that the American market was no longer viable. As innovative entrepreneurs who want to survive, they developed new markets in Japan and China to which they export their lumber. I am sure that entrepreneurs in the member's area do the same thing. True entrepreneurs do not wait for the government. They take action and ask the government to get out of the way.

• (1640)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for that very passionate speech and I also want to congratulate him on his re-appointment to cabinet. It is one that I think we were all very pleased to see.

Business of Supply

I would also like to say that the member is a very good, strong representative of the people of Beauce. I knew very little of the area, but this gentleman is a strong advocate for it.

Most of us in the House have received letters from different groups and organizations such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. This group that represents small- and medium-size business has come forward with certain recommendations, the first one being the freezing of payroll taxes. This group recognizes that increasing CPP and those small payroll taxes are huge disincentives to business to allow them to expand and grow. That was the number one priority.

Its second priority was reducing red tape. The member has spoken a bit about that, but the third one is what I want to mention very quickly, and that is where the organization talks about controlling spending. This government, even through the stimulus spending, was prompted by the opposition to spend more. When we talk about coming back to balanced budgets, the opposition members say that we need to spend more.

Could the member tell us the dangers in that for all of the economy, especially small- and medium-size business?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Madam Speaker, the danger with deficits is that they become chronic. A deficit increases the debt, and we are working for future generations of Canadians. We do not want to impose a heavier fiscal burden on our children and grandchildren. It is important to eliminate the deficit, and we have a plan to do so. In 2014-15, Canada will no longer have a deficit. The proposal we made in our most recent budget was analyzed by all Canadian economists and found to be very credible. But, it is going to be difficult. We will have to analyze every program and make decisions. When there is no money to pay for a program, we will have to make the necessary decisions. Our government has the courage to make these decisions on behalf of future generations.

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Madam Speaker, when it comes to talking economic policy, sometimes it is difficult to ask questions in a short fashion.

Most of the profits of large corporations in Canada these days are made through the sale of products on the commodities market. Could my colleague, the esteemed professor in economics, explain to me how the increased tax on a product that is sold on the world commodities market will come back to consumers in Canada?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Madam Speaker, my response will be very brief since, earlier, I invited the hon. member to read Hayek and Bastiat and I believe he intends to do so.

I said that we need to lower the taxes on all businesses so that they have more money in their pockets. They will thus be able to continue to create wealth and sell their products in Canada and abroad.

The Deputy Speaker: Before resuming debate, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Etobicoke North, The Environment.

•(1645)

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, colleagues will have to clap a little louder because I am far away from the Speaker and she has to be able to hear it. I will be splitting my time today with the member for Vancouver Quadra.

It is with great pleasure today that I rise to speak to this motion presented by the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North, that, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize the important role Canadian small businesses play in creating employment in their communities by lowering the small business income tax rate in order to encourage job creation.

First, I want to commend the member for his recognition of the important role that the small business community plays in Canada. I started my first small business when I was 19 years old, as a university student. I was in the business of renting compact refrigerators to university students. I made more money in the last year of my undergraduate degree in finance than I did in my first year as a member of Parliament, which shows that, for Canadians, cold beer is more important than good representation.

I come from a multi-generational family of small business people and so I understand the importance of it.

It is really important for this motion to be here because it enables us to talk about the importance of priorities. I think the government has made some decisions that reflect the wrong priorities to create a sustainable economy, an economy where we not only protect and create the jobs of today but, more importantly, we create the jobs of tomorrow.

In terms of the government's set of priorities, last January the government actually increased taxes on small businesses by increasing the EI premiums. At a time when we have unemployment rates in Canada that are stubbornly high, at a time when we have seen hundreds of thousands of full-time jobs lost and replaced by part-time work, at a time, in my part of Nova Scotia where in the counties of Hants County, Kings County and Annapolis County we have lost 11,000 full-time jobs since September 2008, when we have seen the unemployment rate go from 5% to 12%, we need to be focused on the kinds of tax reform measures that can actually create jobs today and create the jobs of tomorrow. I think that is where the government misses it.

The reality is the further corporate tax cut that the government proposed, and has since implemented, will only benefit the top 5% of Canadian companies. It will not benefit small businesses. I know government has done a very effective job of, in some ways, convincing or fooling the small-business community to make it believe it would benefit from this. However, I would remind the House that only 5% of Canadian businesses will actually benefit from further corporate tax cuts.

Business of Supply

We in the Liberal Party do not have some ideological aversion to cutting corporate taxes. In fact, when we were in government, we cut corporate taxes, but we did it when we were in surplus, at a time when we had surplus budgets which enabled us to cut corporate taxes and still balance the budgets, invest in health care and education transfers to the provinces, and invest in research, development and technology, and the jobs of tomorrow.

It is important to look at these priorities because today, at a time when we are in deficit, these choices are even more important. It is important also right now because the Conservatives inherited a \$13 billion surplus. They spent their way through that surplus and put Canada into deficit even before the economic downturn. They increased spending in their first three budgets by 18%, three times the rate of inflation. Their record of waste and mismanagement includes: increasing government advertising by 300%; increasing ministerial office budgets by 14% last year; we all know of the G20 billion-dollar boondoggle, including the fake lakes and now the RCMP are investigating; and the first act of the government after the election was to expand its cabinet.

Therefore, the Conservatives are not even leading by example. They are not setting an example to Canadians. In fact, they are telling Canadians to tighten their belts and yet they will not control their own spending.

● (1650)

In terms of broader economic policy, we need a credible plan to eliminate the deficit and smart government policies to help create the jobs in the economy of tomorrow. It is important to recognize that while the macro numbers are very good in Canada, if we look at the overall numbers for the Canadian economy alone, they mask some real challenges in many of our regions.

We have what is commonly referred to as the Dutch disease in Canada. The commodity boom that is fueling the growth in many sectors, such as oil, gas, natural resources, minerals, the extractive sectors in Canada, is driving our dollar higher. As that occurs, it is crowding out many manufacturing and value-added jobs.

We are very fortunate to have the natural resource wealth we have in Canada, the mineral and oil and gas wealth, but at the same time we must recognize the increase in commodity prices. I think most people believe that the secular trend for commodities is going to go up over the next 5 or 10 years, and perhaps longer, as the growth for commodities continues to grow, and as India, China and other emerging economies demand those commodities. We must recognize that there is a real impact on other sectors of high commodity prices and the high Canadian dollar as a result of that.

Therefore, we need to have smart tax policy to help create jobs in the small-business sector and in other sectors tomorrow, particularly, the green economy and the areas of research and development and commercialization. In fact, it is time we have meaningful tax reform in Canada. We have not had tax reform in Canada since 1971 with the Carter Commission, which, among other things, eliminated an inheritance tax and brought in a capital gains tax.

Our tax reform should be based on prosperity and evidence, not on politics and ideology. My quarrel with the Conservative government's tax policies is that so often, in fact without exception, its tax

policies are based on either politics or ideology. Cutting the GST is an example when it took office. I have no doubt that cutting the GST is popular, but from an economic perspective it was probably the dumbest tax move it could have made in terms of doing nothing for productivity and prosperity.

Conservatives were more interested in buying votes than building productivity or prosperity. They did nothing to create jobs. I acknowledge it was politically popular, but we need to be focused on jobs and opportunity of the future when we are dealing with a high deficit and the need to reform taxes, not just politics and ideology.

It is notable that one of the things we should consider in terms of tax reform is what we do with the capital gains tax. The capital gains tax in Canada locks up capital and forces investors to make decisions based on tax reasons and not on legitimate economic or investment reasoning. The Conservatives promised in their 2006 platform to eliminate the capital gains tax for individuals on the sale of assets when the proceeds are reinvested within six months. The Conservatives have never followed-through on that promise.

However, cutting the capital gains tax or eliminating the capital gains tax would actually unleash a lot of capital, which would enable more money to be reinvested in small business, venture capital, early-stage technology investments, and potentially create a lot of jobs and economic activity. In fact, I would posit one of the smartest tax moves one could make is reforming the capital gains tax to encourage more investment in Canada.

In terms of greening the economy, the eco-energy retrofit tax credit that the previous Liberal government established, made a lot of sense, encouraging Canadians to renovate and green their homes with that tax credit. The Conservatives eliminated that tax credit and then brought it back on the eve of an election, but only for one year.

Business of Supply

● (1655)

To explain how these kinds of tax tinkering can affect real jobs, I will refer to a company in my riding, Sustainable Housing, which had grown to about 50 employees under the previous government's tax credit that enabled the company to make long-term plans, hire people, have 50 people conduct energy audits, help people renovate their homes and help them design new energy systems, whether it is geothermal or new heat pumps or new hyper-efficient furnaces or solar panels or insulation or new windows or doors. They were helping people assess or audit their homes to determine what to do to cut their energy consumption. The company had about 50 employees. When the Conservatives got rid of that program, it went down to about 20 employees.

Now that the Conservatives have promised to bring back the program for one year, those companies are not quite sure what to do because companies cannot make long-term investment decisions based on one-year election promises. I would urge the Conservatives to think about that and to consider extending those kinds of programs for a longer period of time.

The benefits of tax measures that help homeowners and companies as well to become more eco-efficient and energy efficient would last long into the future. The reality is that if there had been more of a focus within the stimulus packages on measures that would help companies and families invest in energy efficiency, those benefits would last decades longer—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I must interrupt the hon. member. His time is up. He may have the opportunity to finish up through questions and comments.

Questions and comments? The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Madam Speaker, the previous speaker on the Conservative side made an interesting comment about how he considers his riding and region to be the Japan of Canada. I found that particularly interesting given that Japan has a higher corporate tax rate than even the United States and it is more than twice as much as Canada's.

I know the member for Kings—Hants cannot speak for that other member but I wonder if he might have been suggesting that we emulate that.

I also wonder if the hon. member has read *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* by Wilkinson and Pickett which shows that the Scandinavian countries and Japan are the happiest, healthiest developed countries in the world; that the United States is the unhappiest, unhealthiest developed country in the world; and that Canada is starting to slide away from the Scandinavian model toward the American model, and how that bears on inequalities in income, and where we tax and how we tax.

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, one of the things we should consider in any tax reform package is not only prosperity and competitiveness, but also fairness and sustainability as part of any tax reform measure. When I talk about sustainability, I am not just talking about environmental sustainability. I am talking about health and community sustainability

The member refers to Japan. I did not hear the remarks by the Conservative minister for small business on Japan but I do not think he would want to emulate the fiscal situation Japan finds itself in at this time.

However, in terms of Scandinavian countries, Scandinavian countries have demonstrated a capacity to invest in innovative social policy but also in competitive corporate tax rates.

I think we can have competitive corporate tax rates, competitive tax rates on investment and on small business, which I would share that view with the hon. member based on his motion, and, at the same time, innovative health and social policy, particularly in measures like early learning and child care which so clearly improve competitiveness for an economy.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the things my colleague from Nova Scotia mentioned was that he disagreed with our government's choice to lower the GST.

He will remember, certainly after our provincial election in Nova Scotia, that the NDP government there quickly raised the HST up by two percentage points, giving us the highest sales tax in all of North America.

If he disagrees with us lowering the GST, does he agree with the Nova Scotia provincial government's increase in the HST following our decrease?

● (1700)

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, it is not my habit to delve into provincial politics but there is a problem when one province has a disparately high consumption tax compared to the next.

The member knows, representing the riding that borders on New Brunswick, which has a lower GST rate, what is happening to the small businesses in his riding. For real and sometimes psychological reasons, people may have an idea that they will save 2%. One needs to be careful on the provincial side.

Nobody in the House is advocating increasing the GST in Canada. However, it was a mistake economically to cut the GST because it took \$12 billion out of the annual revenue of the Government of Canada. If that \$12 billion were used to cut personal income taxes, cut taxes on small business, cut taxes to encourage early stage investment and put into research and development, we would create far more jobs and economic activity.

That is why we need a study of our tax system. We need to focus on building a tax reform package for Canada that would create more jobs, the jobs of tomorrow, and a more prosperous, fair and competitive Canada. That is why we need real tax reform. I hope the finance committee of the House of Commons will endeavour to study this issue on a multi-partisan basis.

What kinds of tax reforms could really build the kind of Canada we could all be proud of down the road and create the jobs of tomorrow?

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on the motion put forward by the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North.

Business of Supply

Small businesses are the bedrock of the Canadian economy. The people who lead them and work in them are the lifeblood of Canadian society. That is why the Liberal Party has traditionally supported any efforts to help small businesses grow stronger.

One part of that mix is lower taxes. Lowering the burden for small business should always be a goal whenever it is affordable. It was under the Liberal government of Paul Martin, when the government was running record surpluses, that the government passed some of the biggest corporate and personal tax reductions in Canadian history. The Liberals believe in keeping taxes as low as is practical while providing high-quality public services and ensuring the sustainability of our society.

Before I give further thoughts on this particular motion, I want to highlight what small business means to Canada.

There are over one million small businesses in Canada. As defined by Industry Canada, those are businesses having fewer than 100 employees. In fact, 98% of all businesses are small businesses and they employ nearly half of the people in the country's private sector. Canada is a trading nation and 87% of our exporters are small businesses responsible for \$84 billion in exports.

Small business is a hugely important source of employment. Many women who wish to have the flexibility to parent and work at the same time choose entrepreneurship to support that objective. In fact, 46% of small businesses have some degree of female ownership.

Small business is a major creator of wealth and a source of employment for new Canadians. It offers new arrivals to the country an avenue to contribute to the growth of their community and the well-being of their own families.

The driver of our economy is small business. Over a 10 year period, nearly 80% of our net job growth came from small business, with large firms shrinking the net number of jobs over that period. That is one of the reasons these tax cuts to large corporations are so egregious. Those funds are being directed at the very organizations that are net job losers at the expense of providing tax cuts to small companies that are the job creators.

Small businesses are flexible and nimble and they can recover more quickly from a difficult period, like the recession that we have just experienced. They hold on to their employees longer and they pick them up more quickly afterward. They can innovate more easily and, when given the right support, they can grow by leaps and bounds.

There are a number of things that small businesses need, not just a lower tax rate. They also need a government that makes it easier for them to do business, one that invests in research and development and makes it easier for innovative firms to commercialize their products. The Conservative government has fallen flat in all of these areas.

The government fell flat when it comes to taxes, something it really likes to thump their chests about, but it turns out that it really did not help small business at all.

One of the first things the Conservative government did when it came into office was to raise personal income taxes. Given that many

small businesses are run either as sole proprietorships or partnerships where business income is taxed at the personal rate, the government actually raised taxes on small business owners.

Although much has been made of the corporate tax cuts included in the previous and current budget, these cuts only help the largest and most profitable corporations. As I said, these are the ones that are seeing net job losses.

The government has chosen big business over small business during a time of record deficits and when it was already slashing programs and eliminating thousands of public service jobs from people who spend money in the small business sector.

On the issue of affordability, the government thinks that money grows on trees, not produced by hard-working Canadians and small businesses. A government can only deliver low taxes if it spends wisely. Unfortunately, the Conservative government has proven to do just the opposite.

The Auditor General and now the RCMP have called into question \$50 million in misappropriated border infrastructure funds that the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka used in his own riding.

•(1705)

We have seen a government pleading with the public service to find efficiencies, while simultaneously increasing spending of ministers and perks in their own ministerial offices and increasing government advertising by 215%.

All told, government spending rose by 40% during the Prime Minister's first four years. These decisions have meant that small businesses are left without real support and taxes have been kept high.

An area where the government could have helped small business was by supporting research and development, but it cut research budgets for the granting councils. The National Research Council, which supports small business in its R and D efforts through the industrial research assistance program, is being cut a huge 20%. Therefore, where is the vision? Where is the plan that fosters equal opportunity and prosperity for all Canadians? Where is the vision for green technology, innovation, sustainability leadership and the green jobs on which we know the future will be built.

The Conservative government appears to be only governing for the short term and is ignoring the kinds of strategies and investment in innovation that are needed for Canadians to maintain their standard of living.

Business of Supply

I do not want to ignore the NDP record with regard to business, because that also has been a reason that there has been lack of support for small business. The government fails to understand the needs of modern business. I am sure the NDP and my hon. colleague from Thunder Bay—Superior North have the best of intentions in bringing this motion forward, but they represent a party that is fundamentally anti-business.

It is important for members of the House to understand that the NDP has, at its core and is guided by, an ethos that stands opposed to the very nature of the marketplace. I will read from the NDP constitutional preamble, the very principles the party maintained at its recent convention. It states, “the production of goods and services shall be directed to meeting the social and individual needs of people within a sustainable environment and economy”. That is good as far as it goes. It continues on to say, “and not to the making of a profit”.

I wonder if members of the NDP can explain how small businesses can contribute to job creation and economic growth if it believes that profit is a dirty word. Without profit, businesses cannot reinvest and grow, cannot hire new employees, cannot innovate and cannot contribute to the development of sustainable technology and business practices. They simply would not exist. To deny that the basic necessity of a business, which is to earn money and profits, is revealing a fundamental lack of understanding of business.

I hope my colleague from Kings—Hants will not complain when I quote him when he said, “The NDP doesn’t know a stock from a sock”.

While I served as environment minister in British Columbia, I co-founded a company that incorporated sustainable principles into our business model, focusing on reforestation and ecological renewal. However, we could not have done so, we could not have grown and expanded this company without capital and that capital was the reinvestment of profit.

Thinking that profit is a bad thing discredits the New Democrats among small business owners and proves them not capable of providing the type of leadership that the small business community so desperately needs.

The Liberal Party supports efforts to lower the tax burden on small businesses, but such efforts must be part of a larger strategy that validates the importance of small business and their profitability and that supports research, provides tools and mechanisms for companies to grow their operations and focuses on key factors, not a scattershot approach.

The Conservative government’s record on small business is abysmal and, unfortunately, the NDP does not think small business should be allowed to make a profit. The one option is too hot and one is too cold. It is clear why small business needs a Liberal option that is just right for the people who are at the heart of small business and a long-term vision for their success.

• (1710)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I only just tuned in the last few minutes, but I heard some discouraging remarks about the NDP’s reputation when it comes to small business.

I come from the socialist paradise of Manitoba and I think my colleague might be interested to know that when we took power in 1999, the most recent government, the government of Gary Doer, one of the most successful provincial governments in the history of Canada, the small business tax imposed by the Conservatives was 11%. I think my colleague would be interested to know that it went down from 11% to 10% to 9% to 8% to 7% to 6% to 5% to 4% to 3%.

I think my colleague would be interested to know that the small business tax in Manitoba is now zero. It is a big fat goose egg. There is no small business tax in Manitoba.

My colleague is sadly mistaken about the treatment of small businesses. Her colleague from Winnipeg North will say that there is a payroll tax. The payroll tax is for businesses with a payroll of \$1 million-plus, and it is 2%.

Maybe she should get her facts straight before she starts slugging the NDP’s position toward small business. Small business has only one friend in this Parliament and it is the New Democratic Party.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, I have to wonder whether the member was at the NDP convention last weekend, where the preamble about socialist principles and the aversion to profit was kept in its constitution. Perhaps the member missed that.

I want to celebrate the accomplishments of that member’s provincial government. However, I would point out that in my province of British Columbia, British Columbia went from the strongest growing economy in Canada to the worst growing economy in Canada in the decade of the 1990s under the stewardship of a high tax NDP government.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, there were aspects of the member’s speech with which I agreed. I agreed with pretty well everything she said when she talked about the pathetic policies of the New Democratic Party in regard to any type of business, whether it was small, medium or large.

I was a little disappointed with her attack on the government and our want to see our economy grow. Government has a role in reducing taxes and reducing a lot of other things, especially red tape.

I do not believe the member was a member when the Liberals were in government. While her party served as government of our country, we saw red tape and regulation grow like never before. The Liberal Party of Canada believed that everything had to be regulated.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business and many other small business organizations applaud this government in its ability to recognize the need to reduce red tape, regulations and those things that handcuff small and medium-sized businesses.

The member from the NDP who brought this motion forward at one time said, “There are elements in our party that have not been adequately concerned about the health and growth of business”.

It is time for the member to stand and recognize that there are elements in that Liberal Party that would just love to see red tape continue to grow and handcuff small business.

Business of Supply

● (1715)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, I am very disappointed in that member supporting his government's tax regime, claiming that it is about making the economy grow when in fact it is things like the GST reduction and corporate tax cuts that economists themselves say are not elements for growing the economy. They are actually the wrong taxes for growing the economy. They may be politically popular, but they are not the right thing to do.

I would love to invite the member opposite to look at the red tape reduction initiative of the government that I was part of in British Columbia. In one year 33% of regulations were reduced. The member's government is talking about 20% by the time it has been in government for six years.

I want to hear about that red tape reduction program protecting the regulations that are important for health, safety and the environment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election. I would also like to inform you that I will share my time with the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

I would like to thank all of my constituents in Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for giving me the privilege and honour of representing them here in the House. I would also like to thank all those who helped me throughout the election campaign: my many friends and particularly my family, including my sister Marianne and my niece Stéphanie.

I rise today in support of this resolution in favour of small businesses. I support it because, historically, the CCF and the NDP have always been in favour of small business. We must remember that, historically, the founding members of the CCF were farmers, people who ran their small agricultural businesses, people who worked in transport, in construction, who had small businesses. These people got together in 1933 for their first big battle: creating the Canadian Wheat Board. They succeeded in 1935. Throughout the economic recession, they understood that uniting their small businesses could help create large Canadian institutions. These small businesses continued to prosper and now, these same small businesses create the majority of jobs. They also represent 30% of our exports.

Small businesses in Canada are firmly committed to innovation. Quite often, these small businesses are the creation of young university grads who, upon getting their university degree, set up small laboratories, innovative companies. They create companies that they hope will become successful. They hope that they will grow and will create jobs.

Clearly, we must support small businesses. That is why the NDP resolutely decided to show its complete trust in them, as demonstrated in our platform. The NDP would like the government to give a \$4,500 tax credit for each job created. A \$4,500 tax credit could be a lifeline for a small business. Not only would this allow it to create jobs, but it could even help the company survive. Indeed, we must not kid ourselves; the first few months for any SME can be excruciating and difficult. However, SMEs create jobs. They create real wealth, not speculation. That is not something that can disappear in just a few days, at the speed of an email. That is what happened in

the U.S., a country that is big on deregulation, big on perfect and free enterprise, a country that systematically favours large institutions. At this time, the U.S. government has had to go heavily into debt in order to save institutions that may not have deserved to be saved. A \$4,500 tax credit for each job created in an SME could go a long way.

We will also support scientific research and experimental development. The government had the opportunity to increase funding for small businesses. It did not do so. Yet we all know that innovation in biotechnology, electronics and all the areas that represent Canada's economic future takes research and development funding. The government missed a good opportunity to support this segment of the economy.

They are also lowering taxes. At present, small businesses are taxed at 11%. That rate could have been lowered to 9%. Lowering taxes in a sector that creates jobs is important.

● (1720)

We have to support job creation and lower taxes for industries that agree to create jobs. Unfortunately, after 12 years of programs from Paul Martin and the current finance minister, we have not seen the major beneficiaries of the tax cuts pass on the slightest benefit to the Canadian public by creating massive numbers of jobs. Twelve years is a relatively long time over which to evaluate a program. This program of systematic corporate tax cuts has clearly not worked, while, despite all the challenges they face, small businesses are creating jobs.

We also generally see in SMEs all the problems that come from the absence of a pension plan. They are too small to qualify for the major private pension plans. The NDP is in favour of revitalizing the Canada pension plan by increasing the pension benefit from 25% to 50% in order to guarantee Canadian workers 50% of their salary as a pension regardless of where they work.

The Canada pension plan was tailor-made for SME employees who do not have access to major pension plans. The NDP has continued working for small business. We believe that SMEs are the future. Entrepreneurs are focusing more and more on the social economy, the environmental economy, the knowledge economy, and they are increasingly running their businesses as co-operatives. They are following in the footsteps of those who created the CCF and the NDP.

This motion simply acknowledges the fact that Canada's economy and job creation are actively supported by SMEs. Without this economic activity, the recession would have hit much harder. We would have suffered a much higher unemployment rate. As in the United States, we would have suffered from the social exclusion of the poorest people. SMEs, firmly focused on the social economy, work to care for and support the poorest in our country who have reached an age where they need active support to stay in their homes. Yes, this social economy will continue to grow. It would be nice to see the government actively supporting it.

The knowledge economy will continue to grow at the speed with which students graduate from university, trained and ready to apply their knowledge to wealth creation and not speculation. This SME economy is firmly focused on job co-operatives, social housing co-operatives, and fishery development co-operatives. Co-operatives can be created in any sector. This economy is based on the idea that wealth creation should belong to those who create wealth, not those who invent it through speculation.

We are strongly opposed to all of the economic activities proposed by the Government of Canada, which aim only to support big businesses and which do nothing for Canada.

● (1725)

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like him to explain in more detail how reducing the tax rate for small businesses makes it possible for them not only to create jobs but also to improve working conditions for their employees.

Mr. Alain Giguère: Madam Speaker, as a general rule, any business that is taxed will immediately reinvest its profits in the growth of the company.

SMEs do not accumulate capital. They do not resort to tax havens. They take their profit and immediately reinvest it in new equipment and manufacturing processes, in scientific research and innovative development.

They cannot waste their resources on tax havens or public private partnerships.

[English]

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my friend's comments on the motion but I was a bit confused and not because the member was speaking very eloquently in French and my French is not that good. I was more confused that I believe I heard him say, in his speech, that he does support cutting taxes for small business but he somehow does not support tax cuts for other business. Then, I heard my good friend from Winnipeg Centre brag about the tax reductions in Manitoba by an NDP government.

I am really trying to understand what is the position of the New Democrats. Do you believe in cutting taxes for business to create job growth for all business or do you not?

● (1730)

The Deputy Speaker: I would just remind all members to direct their comments through the Chair.

Business of Supply

The hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Madam Speaker, the Conservative member has just put his finger on the problem. We must support measures that help Canada and avoid measures that harm Canada.

At present, tax reductions for big business, banks and oil companies have not yielded the expected results.

Where are the numerous jobs that these businesses have created? There are none. Where are the great social benefits they have created? There are none.

When taxes are cut for SMEs, they immediately reinvest in the economy. They do not wait years to go ahead with international purchases. The SMEs act immediately.

We will support measures that help Canada and stop cutting taxes for those that have benefited from these cuts and done nothing for Canada.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member makes reference to, and we are glad to see that the NDP has recognized the need for, small business tax breaks. We understand and we appreciate the vital role that small business across Canada plays.

Earlier today in question period, one of the member's colleagues made reference to the free trade argument. Small business is dependent on expanding markets in the world. Has the NDP position on the idea of freer trade in certain circumstances changed? Does the NDP see the value in terms of potential job creation for small business by looking into those types of agreements in the future?

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Madam Speaker, earlier I pointed out that SMEs account for 30% of our exports. Quite often the exports are technologies that they have developed, an unparalleled know-how. In that regard, it does not really matter whether or not there is a good market or a free market. They can get into the market because of the excellence of their products. That is what distinguishes Canada's small businesses. They get good results. They are excellent.

[English]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my colleague from Thunder Bay—Superior North for crafting this opposition day motion, as well as for his excellent work in supporting small business. This motion is very important and indicative of long-standing NDP policy in the area of support for small business.

I want to reiterate the motion, which states:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize the important role Canadian small businesses play in creating employment in their communities by lowering the small business income tax rate in order to encourage job creation.

Business of Supply

Small business plays a huge and vital role in our communities. Small- and medium-size businesses employ about 56% of all Canadian working people. That is a huge number. About eight million Canadians work for small- and medium-size businesses and small business makes up almost 98% of all Canadian enterprises. It is a huge segment of our economy.

There are 2.3 million small businesses in Canada and about half of Canadian GDP is generated by small and medium business. We are talking about a huge and important sector of our economy.

I would also point out that about one-third of all self-employed persons in Canada are women and they have ownership stakes in about 45% of small and medium business. This number is growing.

I would like to talk for a minute about the small businesses in my riding of Parkdale—High Park. It is a fairly well established, older community in the west end of Toronto and is one of the most desirable communities in the city because of the presence of small businesses. It is a community with older, tree-lined streets where people do not have drive to big box stores but can walk to their neighbourhood grocers, the Home Hardware store on Roncesvalles, clothing stores, shoe shops, restaurants and all of the services that are provided by small businesses in the community. I believe that the quality of life is increased immeasurably in my community because of small businesses.

The people who own these businesses work incredibly hard. Many of them live in the neighbourhood. Some of them live above their stores, others live in the neighbourhood and they have a stake in the community. Yes, their business is there, but, as I say, many of them live there and their kids go to the school.

They are tremendously engaged in the community and they express that engagement not only by the services and goods they provide through their businesses but by sponsoring sports teams, raising funds for community initiatives like creating the Wabash Community Recreation Centre or the Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre.

They are very active in neighbourhood business improvement associations. These associations were actually pioneered in Bloor West Village thanks to Alex Ling, who was a visionary in this area. The BIAs have championed the beautification of the business areas and neighbourhoods but also how to attract investment in the community, how to draw people into the neighbourhood.

Therefore, small businesses do not just serve the people who live in the neighbourhood, but attract people from all over the community. They are huge sponsors of festivals, such as the Ukrainian and Polish festivals. They are incredibly important to the lifeblood of the community.

• (1735)

We have moved this motion because, unfortunately, both the Conservative government and the Liberals have been supporting tax cuts across the board without any job creation measures attached. The current tax cut that is going forward, which both the Conservatives and the Liberals voted for, has no job creation measure attached to it, whereas this motion speaks to cutting small business taxes.

We know that small businesses are not going to ship jobs out of the country, but that they employ people in our neighbourhoods. In fact, they provide good jobs, they train people, they innovate and they are creative businesses in our communities. Whether in boom periods or recessions, they try as much as possible to maintain the stability of their employment in their businesses. They will do their damndest not to lay people off, even when they are really struggling as businesses. We have certainly seen many small businesses struggling in our cities and neighbourhoods.

Reducing small business taxes from 11% to 9% is a way of providing an incentive for small businesses to take on more staff to grow their businesses. We also propose a tax credit to offset some of the costs of hiring new people, a credit of up to \$4,500, including a job retention measure.

These tax cuts are concrete measures tied to job creation. We believe they would create over 200,000 new jobs. That is why we believe this proposal is so important and significant.

We are talking about sustainable job creation because we know that when small businesses expand and take on staff, they tend to retain their staff. We have seen the good quality jobs they create right in our own neighbourhoods. We have seen their resiliency in good times and bad, and we see the community investment these small businesses provide right in our own communities, because they roll their money right back into the community. They expand their business locally and create jobs locally. The people they employ, for the most part, live right in our neighbourhood. When they get employed, they spend their money in the neighbourhood and pay taxes. This is good for everyone.

In summary, our motion speaks to the important role in the Canadian economy played by small businesses. We want to help small businesses play that important role. We want to see them grow and thrive, create jobs and invest in our communities. We believe a tax cut for small business would encourage them to hire more staff. Our tax credit would, in fact, tie strings to the hiring. That makes much more sense.

Unfortunately, the party opposite has tied a very short-term credit to EI increases, which are completely unnecessary. We are going to have a \$17 billion EI surplus over the next five years, on top of the \$57 billion that has already been rolled into paying down the deficit. I would like to discount that approach and say how strongly I support this motion, because it is the right measure for small business in Canada.

• (1740)

Mrs. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am fascinated by what I am hearing from the opposition members. During the campaign that we all just went through, I remember very distinctly both the NDP and Liberal commentary that our government's proposals for lower taxes did not equal job creation. In fact, many a time we were told that, and yet I am now hearing the opposite from the other side.

Given the convergent view of the opposition parties on big business and small business, do they not understand that many small businesses depend entirely on big business, because they are the suppliers and subcontractors who help large businesses operate and profit.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, the role that small business plays not only in providing neighbourhood goods and services but also in supporting and servicing larger businesses, in particular, is very important to our Canadian economy.

What is completely unacceptable is how the government has turned a blind eye to the massive de-industrialization of our manufacturing sector, which has not only destroyed innovation and jobs in that sector but has also had a devastating effect on the many thousands of small businesses and related jobs in the service sector, which has seen large manufacturers ship jobs out of this country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the whole idea of urban revitalization that the member referred to, particularly the community commercial strips and the important role small businesses play in their revitalization.

In my own area, I look at areas like Selkirk Avenue and the role private businesses have to play there. Providing tax incentives and reducing taxes gives more opportunity for many of those small businesses to participate in revitalization.

I would look to the member to comment on that area.

• (1745)

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I do believe that the economic development provided by small businesses does lead to urban revitalization.

Where there are thriving businesses, there are thriving communities. When the small business sector creates jobs and opens up avenues for employment, they beautify the streets and create economic activity. It gives people a chance to gain employment and it can lead to the revitalization of an entire neighbourhood.

That is why I believe that business improvement associations are so important in marshaling the resources of businesses to improve their neighbourhoods.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, several times today we have heard questioners from other parties claiming that the NDP does not really understand business, does not have a history of business and is not fiscally responsible. I have heard quite a few comments and jokes about dubious assumptions.

In 2009, the federal Department of Finance published a report, which is available, analyzing provincial governments across Canada from 1986 to 2009. It showed that NDP provincial governments were the best across Canada. In 51% of the years, they had balanced budgets. The Conservatives were number two. Liberals were worst of all at 30%.

I would ask the member for Parkdale—High Park why are there these myths about fiscally irresponsible NDPers, which get thrashed about repeatedly here?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for pointing out the myth, because it is well documented that the New

Democratic Party has the best record for prudent fiscal management, as published by the finance department of the Government of Canada.

We welcome that reputation and important record.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, the great parliamentary secretary who works with us.

It is with great pleasure that I rise to support a call for tax cuts from the socialist NDP, as unbelievable as that may be. Unlike the tax-and-spend NDP opposition, we truly believe Canadian families and businesses should not pay higher taxes.

Our Conservative government has been a strong supporter of lower taxes and has clearly demonstrated this since taking office in 2006.

We understand that lower taxes make our economy stronger and create good, long-term jobs for today and tomorrow. That is why we are delivering historic tax relief and cutting taxes in every way that government collects them, from personal taxes to consumption taxes, to business and excise taxes, and others.

Since 2006, in fact, we have had an outstanding record of cutting over 120 taxes. We reduced the GST. We increased the amount Canadians earn tax free. We introduced pension income splitting. We introduced important tax credits like the Canada employment credit, the working income tax benefit, the child tax credit and much more. We have reduced the overall tax burden to its lowest level in more than 50 years, including by removing over one million low-income Canadians from the tax roll. We have built on our legacy of tax relief by reducing taxes on savings via our the landmark tax-free savings account, the most important personal savings vehicle since the RRSP.

Overall, the total savings for a typical family are over \$3,000, leaving more money in Canadian families' pockets, where it is most needed and where it belongs.

Tax freedom day, the day Canadians start working for themselves after paying off all their taxes to all levels of government, has come earlier and earlier under this government. In 2005, under the tax-and-spend Liberals, tax freedom day was on June 26. However, after more than 120 tax reductions by our government, including the reduction in the GST from 7% to 5% and the introduction of the tax-free savings account and pension income splitting, the savings for a typical family are over \$3,000 a year. As a result, tax freedom day now comes on June 6 this year, more than two weeks or some 20 days earlier.

Business of Supply

Our Conservative government's clear and positive record of allowing Canadians to keep much more of their own hard-earned money is great news and one of our proudest achievements.

Our record also includes giving Canadian job-creating businesses more freedom to create jobs and make further investments by improving their tax competitiveness. That includes by reducing business taxes, eliminating the federal capital tax, providing tax relief to our manufacturing sectors, and more and more and more.

We also recognize the vital role that small business plays in the economy and job creation. That is why, since 2006, we have also lowered their tax bill to help them succeed, such as by reducing the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%, increasing the amount of income eligible for the lower small business tax rate from \$300,000 to \$500,000, and increasing the lifetime capital gains exemption for small businesses from \$500,000 to \$750,000.

Building on our record, we are doing more to help small businesses. For instance, in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a plan that every person in this Parliament should support, we announced the new hiring credit that will encourage some 525,000 small Canadian businesses to hire new employees with a one-year EI break.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has welcomed it:

CFIB is extremely pleased to see its top budget priority—an EI Hiring Credit for Small Business—announced in the 2011 budget...this credit will be a major help to small firms in growing their workforce.

While our Conservative government has a strong and proven record of lowering taxes for Canadian families, seniors and businesses, especially small businesses, the NDP's record is dramatically different.

The socialist NDP and the NDP members of Parliament have a proven record of pushing a high-tax agenda by voting no again and again in the House of Commons to our Conservative government's initiatives to lower the tax burden. The NDP voted against reducing the GST. The NDP voted against pension income splitting. The NDP voted against reducing the small business tax rate. The NDP voted against the small business hiring credit. The NDP voted against our tax relief for families and businesses each and every time.

Even more troubling, the socialist NDP has repeatedly protested and mocked our efforts to leave more money with everyday Canadian families and businesses.

• (1750)

What is more, public statements by the socialist NDP leader and members of Parliament clearly underline their fundamental belief that Canadian families and businesses should be forced to send more of their hard-earned money to government.

Here are just a few examples:

The NDP leader has declared, "Tax cuts that have no basis in terms of moving the economy forward, such as the GST proposal...are not the wise choice now".

The NDP member for Hamilton Mountain bemoaned, "The Prime Minister is picking up the [tax fighter] mantle...The Conservatives

are intent on taking us in the wrong direction". Imagine, tax cuts in the wrong direction. Who would figure?

The NDP MP for Victoria complained, "The Conservatives have a single-minded obsession with tax cuts that is not shared by the majority of Canadians...all they've delivered are tax cuts".

The election on May 2 actually proved something totally different from that thought. It makes one wonder.

Even worse, while our government is promoting positive economic policies that would give businesses more freedom to grow and create even more Canadian jobs, the NDP has been promoting negative job-killing economic policies.

In a telling moment, even the NDP member for Thunder Bay—Superior North, the sponsor of today's motion, sheepishly and stunningly admitted publicly, "There are elements in our party that have not been adequately concerned about the health and growth of businesses".

Specifically, they are targeting job-creating businesses with massive business tax hikes along with massive EI and CPP premium increases.

First, as businesses try to rebuild and recover from the recession, the NDP wants to slap a huge \$10 billion a year tax hike on them, something that would hit small businesses very hard. A \$10 billion a year NDP tax hike would mean losing good Canadian jobs and jeopardizing the financial security of hard-working Canadians.

Small businesses know that Canadians cannot afford that. They know they cannot afford higher taxes and cannot afford the job-killing policies of the NDP.

Despite what the NDP says, small businesses strongly stated their objections with the NDP's tax hike plan during the recent election campaign. Here is what Catherine Swift of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said, "—an awful lot of medium-sized companies that will also be affected by the tax hike". She added that cutting corporate tax rates will help small-business, small firms and that they are very supportive of continuing the reduction in corporate income tax.

Second, small businesses are extremely concerned with the NDP plan to hike EI and CPP premiums. As we all know, the NDP is a strong supporter of a 45-day work year, something that would drastically increase EI premiums by a whopping 35%, and other legislation to dramatically expand EI as demonstrated last fall.

Here is what the CFIB said at the time:

Business of Supply

To have Liberal, NDP and Bloc MPs all support a private members' bill to dramatically increase the generosity of EI benefits is troubling to say the least. This bill would drastically increase EI rates as people would qualify for incredibly generous benefits after only nine weeks of full-time work. [This would] make it harder for businesses to hire skilled workers...It's totally irresponsible—

Even worse, the NDP wants to dramatically increase CPP premiums by doubling them. Again listen to what the CFIB had to say about that, “NDP talk of doubling CPP benefits would mean increased premiums and a heavy hit on small business payroll costs”.

While our Conservative government is focused on keeping taxes low and helping create jobs, the socialist NDP wants to raise taxes and kill jobs despite today's platitudes.

People in my constituency have seen NDP policies at work. We have seen our kids move away. We have seen jobs go to Alberta. It is amazing that after four years the province of Saskatchewan, with a population of one million people, all of a sudden announced today that the population is at 1,054,000 just because the proper policies were in place for taxation, just for allowing businesses to grow, just for allowing businesses to expand, and just by saying it is open for business. Saskatchewan has seen what the NDP can do. It has also seen what can happen when proper policies are put in place, and the population growth has definitely proven that.

● (1755)

[Translation]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely surprised today. I must admit, I did not take economics 101, but if I were to take it, I would want someone from this side of the House to teach it. I was listening to the minister's brilliant presentation earlier and he was talking about countries where businesses have more freedom and pay less taxes. I wonder whether he was talking about Ireland, which is on the verge of bankruptcy, or the United States, which might default on its payments and see its credit rating fall if the two houses cannot agree on increasing the debt ceiling. Do they have any examples of what they are talking about? They seem to be strong in economics across the way.

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, we do not have to look too far, we just need to look in the mirror here in Canada to see what happens when we bring about responsible spending and responsible tax cuts.

Look at the jobs that have been created in the last couple of years just by having good, progressive tax cuts, again, still maintaining a goal to balancing our budget, still maintaining the fact that we want to be a prudent spender of taxpayers' money, but again, we are allowing business to grow. Businesses hire people. People spend money. It is great for the economy. It is great for families. That is how we end up with a strong family.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have dealt extensively with the CFIB. It says:

While Canada may have weathered the recent economic downturn better than most, we did not escape without our fair share of scrapes and bruises.

It goes on to say:

In the rush to stimulate the economy, our government sank further and further into debt. While a few did manage to spend within their means, the majority accelerated a pattern of overspending that predated the economic downturn.

I quoted that because the hon. member quoted extensively from the CFIB. I would not want to give the impression to Canadians watching this that it is working for the Conservative government.

I do want to talk to the hon. member about the 45-day work week. He mentioned in his speech about how people are moving to Alberta. I am not sure if he mentioned that as a negative impact toward his community, but if we diminish this 45-day work week initiative when it comes to seasonal work, then these people will be moving even more.

Seasonal work has a cyclical pattern throughout much of rural Canada, and with that kind of attitude, it could get worse for seasonal workers.

● (1800)

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member must have misheard me. They are actually moving back from Alberta.

Under the NDP government and its policies kids from Saskatchewan could not find a job there, so they went to Alberta to work. Now, under a good Conservative-style government with good tax policy, the kids are coming back from Alberta and they are growing the economy. The Saskatchewan unemployment rate is less than 5%. It is one of the best in the country. That is reality when we have good, proper taxing and spending.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Prince Albert mentioned that he had a provincial NDP government he had to deal with. We had one in Ontario in the early 1990s, led by the current leader of the Liberal Party. We used to have a saying in Ontario: “How does an individual start a small business in Ontario? One buys a medium-sized one and wait”.

I am just wondering if Saskatchewan had the same experience when it had a provincial NDP government.

Mr. Randy Hoback: That is very interesting, Mr. Speaker, and yes, I would have to say we did have that experience. We did not even see the medium-sized companies form in Saskatchewan. They just decided to boycott us altogether.

The companies in Calgary sure love Saskatchewan because all our bright and wonderful kids under the NDP government went to Calgary and made their fortune. Those are the ones who are coming back and spending money in Saskatchewan.

There is no comparison between the city of Saskatoon under the NDP government and the city today. The small towns in Saskatchewan today are actually growing, whereas under the NDP government, people were trying to figure out how to get out of them as quickly as possible.

It is clear the policies of the NDP are outdated and did serious damage to the economy of Saskatchewan. We should not go down that road. We cannot afford it here in Canada.

Business of Supply

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly glad to have the opportunity to stand here today and speak to the motion regarding small business taxation and our Conservative government's strong economic record, especially in this area.

Since forming government in 2006, we have focused on lowering taxes for families; seniors; businesses, especially small businesses; and everyday Canadians. However, before I continue, let me be clear. Our record of aggressive tax relief for Canadians did not come easily.

As we all know, we had a minority government. We had to fight the socialist NDP every step of the way. The NDP has opposed and voted against every one of our budgets from 2006 to 2011. It has proudly voted against all 120 of our tax cuts and it has repeatedly criticized our tax cutting measures.

My colleagues quoted this earlier, but I think it does bear repeating because it was very important and it speaks to the perspective, when the NDP MP for Windsor—Tecumseh said:

—it is important for us to look at the policies the government has implemented since it has been in power, and in particular the Conservatives' absolute obsession with their ideology around the importance of tax cuts to move economic development forward in this country.

Our record speaks for itself as the best recovery from the global economic recession. We are standing in a great position. We have 560,000 new jobs created in this country. It is a fantastic record showing that our tax cuts and our economic action plan are working.

When it comes to taxes, the NDP record is clear. It will vote for high taxes time and again. From voting against cuts to the GST, not once but twice, to voting against tax cuts for small businesses, the NDP high tax agenda is in sharp contrast to our Conservative government's record, a record that I would like to share with the House, especially for the new members who may be unaware of some of the really important measures and again some of the measures that their party actually voted against.

However, before I highlight the examples of our strong action to lower taxes since 2006, I would like to inform the House that we are supporting the motion for one simple reason: we do support lower taxes for Canadians.

In terms of our record, we have shown a great tax track record. We have cut taxes in every way government collects them: personal, consumption, business, excise, and more. We have cut over 120 taxes since 2006 all total, leaving \$3,000 more in the pockets of families where it belongs. We have removed one million low-income Canadians completely from the tax rolls. We have lowered the GST not once, but twice, 7% to 6% to 5%. We have introduced tax credits like the child's art tax credit, the children's fitness tax credit, family caregiver tax credit, volunteer firefighter tax credit, Canada employment tax credit, the working income tax benefit, and the child tax credit and many more.

We have not only lowered taxes in every way the government collects them, we have also introduced the tax free savings account to encourage Canadians to save more. Overall, we have reduced the tax burden on Canadians to the lowest level in nearly 50 years.

While we have been leaving more of Canadians' hard-earned money in their pockets, we have also given business more freedom to grow, especially small business. As we all know, small business is the backbone of our economy. Their entrepreneurialism fosters the growth in jobs that so many Canadians depend on for their livelihood. We all recognize the commitment, dedication, and sacrifice that each small business owner has made each and every single day. That is why our government declared 2011 the year of the entrepreneur.

The Conservative government's commitment and dedication to small businesses is demonstrated through the tax relief we have provided them since 2006 to encourage their growth, success and prosperity. The record is as impressive as it is long.

Among the highlights, we have reduced the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%. We have also increased the amount of income eligible for the lower small business tax rate, from \$300,000 to \$400,000 to \$500,000. That has been a hugely important measure for those small businesses who would have jumped into that 16%, 17%, 18% bracket. They can use it to grow their businesses even better. We have increased the lifetime capital gains for small businesses from \$500,000 to \$750,000, the first increase since 1988.

● (1805)

However, our Conservative government recognizes there is always more to do to assist small businesses and encourage growth. That is why in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan we announced a number of new measures that support small business, such as the temporary hiring credit for small business to encourage more growth in the sector. This will encourage some 525,000 Canadian small businesses to hire new employees with a one-year EI break and one that has been welcomed by small business and others in Canada.

In the words of the Toronto Board of Trade:

SMEs are the engines of job growth...Spurring productivity and employment growth among SMEs, as this Budget does, should help Canada's economic recovery.

We are also making it easier for small business to work with the tax system which can be overwhelming and extremely frustrating.

Business of Supply

Specifically, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan includes important steps to improve the provision of information, enhance service, reduce administrative burden and increase taxpayer fairness for businesses dealing with the Canada Revenue Agency. One example, and I am really pleased as the parliamentary secretary for national revenue, is we have now ensured that businesses get written electronic answers to their written queries. This was warmly welcomed by small business in Canada.

In the words of Catherine Swift of Canada Federation of Independent Business:

Requiring CRA to provide written interpretation on tax inquiries when requested through CRA's online window will bring a significant improvement in transparency and accountability...In this Year of the Entrepreneur, the government took several important steps to help small businesses spend less time focusing on red tape and spend more time creating jobs and growing their firms.

As a member of the red tape commission, I have seen many positive steps there.

We have announced \$3 million in annual ongoing support to make BizPaL permanent.

Just yesterday we voted on Bill C-3 in which we committed \$20 million to support the Canadian Youth Business Foundation's activities to ensure that young entrepreneurs had the support and resources to make their dreams of becoming a business owner possible through mentorship, learning resources and start-up financing. Again, I want to point out that this important measure was actually voted against by the opposition.

There is really so much to say in terms of the many things that we have done to support small business. I will leave it here and look forward to some questions.

● (1810)

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I clearly heard the member opposite from Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor twice use profane language during the former speech by the member from our side of the House, which I believe to be unparliamentary language. I think he should apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): There is no doubt that profane language is certainly a contravention of the Standing Orders. I did not hear what was said. I do recall hearing some chatter from that end of the House. We can certainly take a look at the record and see if anything shows up there, unless the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor has something to add.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I did say something and to say it was slightly off-colour is probably an understatement. I want to apologize to her. I want to apologize to all members of the House and to anybody who picked it up on the television broadcast. I sincerely apologize.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard my hon. colleague's comments in reference to my party and some of the things we had done.

I am not sure what she has against lowering the small business tax from 11% to 9%. She talked eloquently about the reduction from 12% to 11%, which is 1% for small and medium-sized business and which we all agree is the engine of this economy. Yet the government is willing to give 5%, 6% and 7% to large business that by all accounts do not create any jobs.

In fact, in my municipality, large businesses take the jobs elsewhere. John Deere is a prime example. It received the tax cut from this level of government and it went to Mexico. Henniges is going to Mexico. I am glad the government gave that corporation a break. I just wish it had created jobs in my community.

Then again, there was the collusion between the current government and the last government. When it came to the \$57 billion in the EI account that the last government pilfered, it took the last remaining \$2 billion. Then we asked that it be put it back, it was just simply washed off the board.

What is the intent of the government? It is to raise EI. So for those workers who get the one-year holiday, they have the rest of their life to continue to pay higher EI, courtesy of the Conservative government, to get less benefit.

I can see the economic action plan is not working for workers, Canadians or families. Indeed, what we are seeing is somebody is getting the money and somebody is getting the shaft.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear a question in all of that, but I will take the opportunity to perhaps respond to some of the comments.

First, our government absolutely supports the motion for lower taxes. We believe it is important for large businesses to be competitive as well as small businesses. I will contrast that with the plan for CPP and the 45-day work week and how that would impact our small businesses in such a negative way.

Small businesses know they can count on our government to move them forward.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the government has made the decision to support this motion, and I applaud its support. However, it has adopted a policy wherein the home revitalization tax credit is only available for one year. Does the government not see the merit for small businesses by making a more genuine commitment, let us say five years, to that program to assist small businesses?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, we are really happy to have announced in the budget the extension of the home eco-energy grant. It is a very popular and I think many people look forward to it. People have called my office asking many questions about it. It is a very warmly-received move by the government. In terms of the budget, we look forward to implementing it.

● (1815)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member's speech, which I thought was outstanding. I also listened to the rhetoric of the NDP member who spoke a few minutes ago. It was a complete mischaracterization of tax policy.

Business of Supply

We know the NDP is simply not being open and transparent about this. It would propose to reduce the marginal tax rate, while increasing taxes that employers pay, whether they are profitable or not.

I am going to give my hon. colleague an opportunity to respond to this because she knows employers pay more to EI than employees do, in fact 140%, and they pay CPP. NDP members stand regularly calling for higher CPP premiums. Do they understand that small businesses pay that whether they are making money or not and how punitive that is on families?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs for raising that really important issue. I know he has been a small business owner and truly understands not only the impact of the small business tax rate but looks at the whole picture. He knows the government needs to look at the whole picture, whether it be CPP, EI or the tax rate.

Again, I welcome the NDP to this new-found desire to help business and I look forward to it continuing.

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank the people of Chicoutimi—Le Fjord for choosing me as their federal member of Parliament on May 2. It is a great honour. Since my constituents want change, both in the riding and in Ottawa, they will not regret voting for the NDP, the party of workers and families.

The motion we are proposing today is more than necessary. Not only are small businesses key to the Canadian economy, they are also a pillar of the local and regional economy; more specifically, they are the future of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean's economy. Year after year, we have been losing more and more people from my region, particularly young people who leave the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region to go and make a life elsewhere, in large centres like Quebec City and Montreal. For example, our last regional migration report indicated that 396 people had left the area. All these people decided to move because they were unable to find work in their field in the region or because wages are higher in big cities.

I cannot blame them for wanting to improve their living conditions and earn more money. However, it is unacceptable that, in 2011, young people cannot establish a career in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region, have a family and live there happily until they retire. That is why, from the first day of my election campaign, I chose the economic diversification of the region as one of my top three priorities. This is achieved through the creation and expansion of small and medium-sized businesses.

In my riding of Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, many SMEs are locally based and contribute to the economic development of the region. Take, for example, Cycles Devinci, a company that manufactures high-end bicycles using various aluminum products. Among other things, this company manufactures the famous BIXI bikes that allow city dwellers all over the world to benefit from an excellent self-service bicycle rental system.

There is also Coderr-02, a social economy enterprise in Alma that works in various sectors: waste material management, development

and, soon, tourism. They also offer placements for people not participating in the workforce. There is also the Fromagerie Boivin, a family-run business in La Baie, which has been making Canadian cheddar since 1939 and recently won a contract with Kraft to produce Amooza cheese. According to Fromagerie Boivin, this new partnership will create 25 to 30 new jobs in the area. That is something to be proud of as a regional SME.

All of these businesses are invaluable and the government should provide them with the means to ensure their growth. Businesses must be created, and this is important because they not only create jobs but they also renew the national and regional industrial structure. Entrepreneurship also curbs poverty and provides social opportunities. According to the Quebec entrepreneurship strategy, funding is often a deciding factor when it comes to starting up and developing a new business. Without these resources, SMEs such as Trimoz, a business in Alma that is implementing a recruitment concept that is unique to Canada; Eckinox Média, which specializes in graphics and media solutions; and Coopérative de solidarité V.E.R.T.E., a new SME in Saguenay that runs two inns, and offers outdoor adventure packages and adventure tourism in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, would not be able to develop and become competitive.

There must be tax cuts for small businesses to encourage the creation of long-term jobs. To have strong SMEs creating wealth and jobs in our regions, it is of the utmost importance to support SMEs in the start-up and development phases. The first five years are the toughest for these small businesses and entrepreneurs who have the courage to start a business in order to improve the economic prosperity of their communities.

If the government is serious about wanting to encourage entrepreneurs to create wealth and jobs, it has to fully support the assistance measures offered to new businesses. That includes technical assistance, venture capital, micro-credit, etc. It is imperative to offer fertile ground, here, in the regions, to allow our SMEs to be born, to grow and to prosper. This implies collective sharing of the risk involved in innovation. We all know the expression “nothing ventured, nothing gained”. Let us not forget that, in a context of market globalization, Canadian small businesses are facing major challenges. They have to remain competitive in a market where they frequently have to compete with much larger players throughout the world.

● (1820)

Although small businesses are the biggest job creators in the Canadian market—we cannot say that enough—they are the victims of fiscal injustice and unfair competition. Small and medium sized enterprises support the so-called mass market. That is why we must support them in order to ensure stability within the Canadian economy.

Business of Supply

Given that 72% of the exporting businesses in Canada have less than 50 employees and produce a third of all exports, it is more than necessary to take immediate action to support these businesses. For once, could we simply give them resources without trying to take them back with the other hand?

The Conservatives are prepared to cut corporate taxes yet again. The Conservatives feel sorry for the major oil companies and think they deserve to be subsidized to the tune of \$2 billion a year. But when the NDP calls on the government to give small and medium-sized businesses room to manoeuvre by cutting their taxes by a measly 2%, the government says no. Again, SMEs create half the new jobs in Canada.

This same government that claims to want to stimulate economic growth and job creation is suddenly no longer able to provide tax support to these companies that could hire a new employee at the end of the year because of their lower tax rate.

Why is the government abandoning the SMEs that are fighting to save every dollar to make small businesses profitable, increase their sales and hire more people from their community?

SMEs in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean need help. We know that, unlike large corporations, small businesses reinvest their profits in the local economy. Does the Conservative government not agree that this reinvestment in the local economy is what will enable us to strengthen Canada's fragile economic recovery?

Small- and medium-sized businesses are also known for creating lasting jobs because, during an economic slowdown, they are more likely to hold onto their employees. SME owners have humane values and principles. They are not obsessed by profit at any cost. They know that if they fire an employee, that family will go without an income and its financial situation will worsen. That family might even live in their neighbourhood. These entrepreneurs make sacrifices for the well-being of their community, and the least the government could do is support them.

When I look at the economic measures in the Conservative budget, I am disappointed. As a citizen, I am disappointed that the government does not have its priorities straight. I am disappointed because I can picture myself as a business owner who must be wondering why his own government refuses to give him the help he needs to support his business. As a parliamentarian, I am disappointed that the Conservative budget left out an excellent proposal put forth by the NDP to reduce taxes for SMEs by 2%.

From an environmental standpoint, the Conservatives are widely considered a complete disappointment, but never would I have expected them to be so out of touch with reality when it comes to economic diversification and support for SMEs. When is this government going to support small businesses? When will it really support the businesses that create jobs?

The problem we have now is with the redistribution of tax revenues. All too often, they are lining the pockets of the largest corporations, which, we can all agree, do not need them as much in order to prosper. That is why it is so crucial to lower taxes for small businesses in order to spur growth and job creation in the business sector. The government absolutely must recognize the role of small businesses in the Canadian economy, and it needs to act now.

• (1825)

[English]

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I feel that any talk from a socialist party about supporting business is just not believable. Saying that we love small businesses but hate large corporations is a little bit like saying that we love eggs but we do not like chickens.

Where will we get all this funding for small businesses if we are hostile to the large businesses? They will leave the country with their huge tax base, along with all the jobs that will surely be lost if they leave. Someone has to pay the piper. All the tax breaks in the world will not help a small business if the economy is a disaster.

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to the Conservative member that the NDP supports wealth creation. However, unlike our Conservative colleagues, we support the redistribution of this wealth in society.

Thus, we would provide more assistance to small businesses than to big businesses, because SMEs create more than half of all the new jobs in Canada. In addition, these same small businesses reinvest more in their local economy and hire local people, no matter where they are located in Canada.

For that reason, we do not necessarily want to tax big businesses more. We want to make small businesses the priority, because big businesses and the major oil companies receive enough tax cuts and subsidies these days.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to a question I asked one of the member's colleagues earlier. He made reference to a number of small businesses in his area and said that a number of those businesses rely greatly on exports.

Earlier today, there was a confusing message coming from the NDP members in regard to their position on freer trade. It seemed to give the impression that new NDP members are a bit more open to the concept of freer trade. Could the member provide some comment on this?

It is great to get those tax incentives and we applaud the motion. To what degree does the member feel that there is a place in certain situations for freer trade among nations?

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to my Liberal colleague that the myth that the NDP is against free trade agreements is false. However, some measures in all of the free trade agreements that we have recently seen in Canada were unacceptable to the NDP in terms of protection for jobs in Canada and Quebec. There are grey areas in the countries we do business with. Are workers there treated properly? Are they paid well? What are their working conditions?

Business of Supply

That is why, in the past, we have analyzed every free trade agreement. Based on these criteria, the NDP is in favour of equality for all citizens of Canada and the world, and it wants to respect these nations. Unfortunately, we did not agree with some measures in the free trade agreements, based on these criteria.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): There is one minute remaining for questions and comments. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

• (1830)

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I, too, listened to the hon. member's comments. It really strikes me as odd that the NDP members constantly attack the energy sector, the banking sector and big business in Canada, and they think they can do this in isolation with small business. It is nonsense.

I personally have been in business in Canada for about 15 years. My family is still in business. We understand a function of a healthy small business sector is a healthy big business sector. It is a healthy economy. Why does the NDP not get this? I would love to hear an answer, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, I will be brief since there is not much time left. In Canadian society, every business, large or small, and even taxpayers, must contribute to wealth redistribution. That is why large companies that make large profits, that have a healthy bottom line, could distribute a bit more money throughout society.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 6:30 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[*Translation*]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

[*English*]

• (1855)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 12*)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Wellsand)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Angus	Armstrong
Ashfield	Ashton
Aspin	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Baird	Bateman
Bélanger	Bellavance
Bennett	Benskin
Bernier	Bevington
Bezan	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Blaney
Block	Boivin
Borg	Boughen
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brousseau	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Brunoogoe	Butt
Byrne	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Caron
Carrie	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Chisu
Chong	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Clarke	Cleary
Clement	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dreeshen	Dubé
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dussault
Dykstra	Easter
Eyking	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Foote	Fortin
Froeman	Fry
Galipeau	Gallant
Garnneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Gill
Glover	Godin
Goguen	Goldring
Goodale	Gossal
Gourde	Gravelle
Grewal	Grogue
Harper	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hassaninia	Hawn
Hayes	Hicbert
Hillyer	Hoback
Hoeppner	Holder
Ihsu	Hughes
Iyer	Jacob

James
Julian
Karygiannis
Kellway
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lamoureux
Larose
Lauzon
Layton
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Lee
Lemieux
Leung
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Marston
Masse
May
McCallum
McGuinity
McLeod
Menzies
Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray
Nash
Nicholson
Nuncz-Melo
O'Neill Gordon
Oliver
Pacetti
Paradis
Payne
Perrault
Pilon
Poirion
Preston
Rac
Raitt
Rathgeber
Raynault
Reid
Richards
Rickford
Saganash
Savoie
Schellenberger
Sella
Shea
Shory
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Smith
Sorenson
Stewart
Storseth
Sullivan
Thibault
Toet
Tremblay
Trotter
Truppe
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 293

Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margarets)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lapointe
Latendresse
Lavergnière
Lebel
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leitch
Leslie
Liu
Lobb
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
Mayes
McColeman
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Menegakis
Mernfield
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Norlock
O'Connor
Oda
Opitz
Papillon
Patry
Péclét
Pilon
Poilievre
Quach
Rafferty
Rajotte
Ravignat
Regan
Rempel
Richardson
Rousseau
Sandhu
Saxton
Seckback
Sgro
Shipley
Sims (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)
Sitsabaiesan
Sopuck
Stanton
Stoffer
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Toone
Trost
Trudeau
Turnell
Uppal
Valeriot
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Ski)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Business of Supply

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

MAIN ESTIMATES, 2011–12

• (1900)

CONCURRENCE IN VOTE 1—SENATE

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved:

That Vote 1, in the amount of \$59,490,350, under PARLIAMENT — The Senate — Program expenditures, in the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012, be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1905)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 13)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Andrews	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Bélanger	Bennett
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruno
Butt	Byrne
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Coderre
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	D'ochert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dion	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)

Nil

Business of Supply

Dykstra	Easter
Eyking	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Foote	Fry
Galipeau	Gallant
Garnau	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodale
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Illyllyer	Hoback
Hoeppner	Holder
Isu	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lamoureux
Lauzon	Lebel
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	Leef
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinity
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murray	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill, Gordon	Oda
Oliver	Opitz
Pacetti	Paradis
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Rac
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Saxton
Schellenberger	Socback
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Smith	
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Trudeau	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Valeriote
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 187	

SAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Bellavance	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothie	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brossseau	Caron

Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Chequette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Fortin	Freeman
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Gravelle
Grogg	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Kellway	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	Layton
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Papillon	Patry
Péclot	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rafferty
Ravignat	Raynault
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Savoie
Sellah	Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Turnel — 106

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC)** moved:

That the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012, except any vote disposed of earlier today, be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say *yea*.**Some hon. members:** *Yea*.**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say *nay*.**Some hon. members:** *Nay*.**The Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.*And five or more members having risen:*

• (1915)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*Business of Supply**(Division No. 14)*

Young (Vancouver South)

Zimmer — 156

YEAS

Members

Adams
Agiukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Aspin
Baceman
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fantino
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gourde
Harper
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Neill Gordon
Oliver
Paradis
Poilievre
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Richardson
Saxton
Sechback
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trotter
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich

Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Baird
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreschen
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Gosal
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hilleyer
Hoepfner
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunnery
MacKenzie
McColeman
Mencagakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Opitz
Payne
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Rickford
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson

Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Brussau
Byrne
Caton
Charlton
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dussault
Eyking
Fortin
Fry
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Hughes
Jacob
Karygiannis
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McQuinty
Michael
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Plamondon
Rae
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Savoie
Sgro
Sorj
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriote — 137

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélanger
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brisson
Byrne
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Coderre
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Foote
Freeman
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Grogue
Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu
Hyer
Julian
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
Layton
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Pécllet
Pilon
Quach
Rafferty
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

*Business of Supply**[Translation]*

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-8, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2012.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it I believe you will find agreement to apply the last recorded division to the current motion, with the Conservatives voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Chris Charlton: The NDP members will be voting no.

Ms. Judy Foote: The Liberal members will be voting no.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Bloc members will be voting no.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party votes no.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*(Division No. 15)***YEAS****Members**

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hilley
Hoback	Hoeppner
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kennedy (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki

Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)

Lauzon

Leef

Lemieux

Lizon

Lukiwski

MacKay (Central Nova)

Mayer

McLeod

Menzies

Miller

Moore (Fundy Royal)

Norlock

O'Neill Gordon

Oliver

Paradis

Poilevre

Raitt

Rathgeber

Rempel

Richardson

Saxton

Seebach

Shipley

Smith

Sorenson

Storseth

Sweet

Toet

Trotter

Tweed

Valcourt

Van Loan

Wallace

Warkentin

Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)

Weston (Saint John)

Wilks

Wong

Yelich

Young (Vancouver South)

Lake

Lebel

Leitch

Leung

Lobb

Lumey

MacKenzie

McColeman

Menegakis

Merrifield

Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)

Nicholson

O'Connor

Oda

Opitz

Payne

Preston

Rajotte

Reid

Richards

Rickford

Scheilengerger

Shea

Shory

Sopuck

Stanton

Strahl

Tilson

Trost

Truppe

Uppal

Van Kesteren

Vellacott

Warawa

Watson

Williamson

Woodworth

Young (Oakville)

Zimmer— 156

NAYS**Members**

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Belanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulterice	Boutin-Sweet
Braham	Brisson
Brossseau	Byrne
Caron	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Gameau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogan
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassani	Issu
Hughes	Hyier
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe

Laroc
Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McGuinly
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perrault
Plamondon
Rae
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Savoie
Sgro
sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriote— 137

Latendresse
Layton
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclét
Pilon
Quach
Rafferty
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
Sitsabaesan
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Turnel

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I will now leave the Chair for the House to go into Committee of the Whole.

(Bill read the second time and the House went into committee of the whole thereon, Ms. Denise Savoie in the chair)

[Translation]

Mrs. Nycote Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Madam Speaker, can the President of the Treasury Board confirm to members of the House that the bill is in its usual form?

(On clause 2)

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Madam Speaker, the presentation of this bill is identical to the one used for the previous supply period.

● (1920)

[English]

However, the supporting schedules have been modified to provide better clarity and transparency by reflecting the portion of funding that was provided through Governor General special warrants.

The Chair: Shall clause 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 2.1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 2.1 agreed to)

Business of Supply

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. In light of the Auditor General's report, will the minister give his personal guarantee that all the money in the estimates will be spent in the prescribed areas, and none of it in other areas, and particularly not in Muskoka?

The Chair: This is not a point of order. I will give the hon. minister a chance to reply, if he wishes.

The Chair: Shall clause 3 carry?

(On Clause 3)

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 3 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 4 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 5 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 6 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 6 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 7 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 7 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Schedule 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Schedule 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Schedule 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Schedule 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Business of Supply

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Preamble agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Title agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Bill agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I rise and report the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.
(Bill reported)

Hon. Tony Clement moved that the bill be concurred in.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, I believe you would find agreement to apply the result of the last recorded division to this motion, with the Conservatives voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, NDP members will be voting no.

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal members will be voting no.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc will be voting against this motion.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, no.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 16)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Bloch	Boughen
Brand	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Brunoogoe
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie

Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Golding	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Kornarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauson	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Odia
Oliver	Opitz
Paradis	Payne
Poitievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storey	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 156

NAYS

Members

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélanger
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brison
Byrne
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Coderre
Côté

Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogan
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Lavardière	Layton
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinly	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Pécllet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rac	Rafferty
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Savoie	Scllah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaicsan
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibault
Toone	Tromblay
Trudeau	Turnel
Valériote	

Nil

PAIRED

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

● (1925)

Hon. Tony Clement moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, I believe you would find agreement to apply the result of the last recorded division to this motion, with the Conservatives voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, the NDP members will be voting no.

Business of Supply

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal members will be voting no.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc will be voting against this motion.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party will be voting no.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 17)

YEAS

Members	
Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Brunooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Finlino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillier
Holback	Hoepfner
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kemney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemicux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunnery
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Oda
Oliver	Optiz
Paradis	Payne
Poitteville	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seebach	Shaw
Shipley	Shroy

Business of Supply

Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storeth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer— 156

SAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brison
Brousseau	Byrne
Caron	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré (Lefebvre)	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dussault	Easter
Eyking	Footé
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Gamcau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguié
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Ilsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kelway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Lavergère	Layton
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nuncz-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclét
Percrault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rac	Rafferty
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Savoie	Sellah

Sgro
 (see)
 Sims (Newton—North Delta)
 Stewart
 Sullivan
 Toone
 Trudeau
 Valeriote— 137

Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
 sor)
 Sitsabaiesan
 Stoffer
 Thibault
 Tremblay
 Turnel

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
 (Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A), 2011-12

The Speaker: The next question is on the motion to adopt Supplementary Estimates (A).

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement moved:

That the Supplementary Estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012, be concurred in.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, I believe you would find agreement to apply the results of the last recorded division to the current motion, with the Conservatives voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, the NDP members will voting no.

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal members will be voting no.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc will be voting against this motion.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, my entire caucus will be voting no.

[Translation]

The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:

(Division No. 18)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Brunoogoe

Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fantino
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gourde
Harper
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Joan
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr
Kram (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leef
Lemicux
Lizon
Lukowski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Neill Gordon
Oliver
Paradis
Poilievre
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Richardson
Saxton
Seebach
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trotter
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast —Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreschen
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Galipeau
Gill
Giguere
Gosál
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Hoepfner
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Konarmicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Monegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Opitz
Payne
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Rickford
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 156

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulعية
Brahmi
Brousseau
Caron
Charton
Chisholm

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélanger
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brison
Byrne
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette

Business of Supply

Chow
Cleary
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dussault
Eyking
Fortin
Fry
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Hughes
Jacob
Karygiannis
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McQuinty
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patri
Perrault
Plamondon
Rac
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Savoie
Sgro
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriote— 137

Christopherson
Codere
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Foote
Freeman
Gameau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Grogubé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu
Hyer
Julian
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
Layton
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bago)
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Pélet
Pilon
Quach
Rafferty
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Sellah
Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)
Sitsabaian
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Turmel

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-9, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2012.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

[Translation]

Hon. Tony Clement moved that Bill C-9, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2012, be read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, I believe you would find agreement to apply the last recorded vote to this motion, with the Conservatives voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, the NDP members will be voting no.

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal members will be voting no.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc will be voting against this motion.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against it.

[English]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 19)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Brunnooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goulding	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Hocppner
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komaricki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leof	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney

MacKay (Central Nova)

Mayes

McLeod

Menzies

Miller

Moore (Fundy Royal)

Norlock

O'Neill Gordon

Oliver

Paradis

Pollivrie

Raith

Rathgeber

Rempel

Richardson

Saxton

Seeback

Shipley

Smith

Sorenson

Storseth

Sweet

Toet

Trottier

Twed

Valcourt

Van Loon

Wallace

Warkentin

Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)

Weston (Saint John)

Wilks

Wong

Yelich

Young (Vancouver South)

MacKenzie

McColeman

Menegakis

Merrifield

Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)

Nicholson

O'Connor

Oda

Opitz

Payne

Preston

Rajotte

Reid

Richards

Rickford

Schellenberger

Shea

Shory

Sopuck

Stanton

Strahl

Tilson

Trost

Truppe

Uppal

Van Kesteren

Vellacott

Warawa

Watson

Williamson

Woodworth

Young (Oakville)

Zimmer— 156

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Beyington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulénice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brossseau	Byrne
Caron	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogg
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	Layton
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin

Masse	Mathyssen
May	McCallum
McQuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Pécllet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rae	Rafferty
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Savoie	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander —Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibault
Toone	Tremblay
Trudeau	Turnel
Valeriote — 137	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I do now leave the chair for the House to resolve itself into committee of the whole.

(Bill read the second time and the House went into committee of the whole thereon, Ms. Denise Savoie in the chair)

[Translation]

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Madam Speaker, can the President of the Treasury Board confirm for the members that the bill is in its usual form?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Madam Speaker, the form of this bill is identical to that used during the previous supply period.

The Chair: Shall clause 2 carry?

(On clause 2)

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 3 agreed to)

The Speaker: Shall clause 4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 4 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Business of Supply

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 5 agreed to)

The Speaker: Shall clause 6 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 6 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall schedule 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Schedule 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Preamble agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Title agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Bill agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I report the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Bill reported)

● (1930)

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement moved that the bill be concurred in.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, I believe you would find agreement to apply the result of the last recorded division to this motion, with the Conservatives voting yes.

The Speaker: Is it agreed to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, NDP members will be voting no.

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, Liberal members will be voting no.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois vote against the bill.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party is voting no.

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 20)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Amrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Brunoogoe
Butt	Calandra
Chikins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chiu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreessen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Gossl
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunny
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	McGagakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Oda
Oliver	Opitz
Paradis	Payne
Poilevre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seckback	Shea
Shikey	Shory
Smith	Sopuck

Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trotter	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast —Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 156

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothé
Boivin	Bong
Boulterice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Diome Labelle	Donnelly
Dont Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dussault	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogubé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Ilsu
Hughes	Ilyer
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	Layton
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Moore (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclét
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rae	Rafferty
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Roussseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Savoie	Sellah

Sgro
sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriote— — 137

Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
Sitsabaiesan
Stoffer
Thibault
Tremblay
Turncl

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
[English]

When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Tony Clement moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you were to seek it, you would find agreement to apply the result from the last recorded division to this motion, with Conservatives voting yes.

The Speaker: Is it agreed to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, this may surprise you, but NDP members will be voting no.

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, Liberal members will be voting no.
[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois vote against the motion.

Ms. Elizabeth May: The Green Party votes against the motion.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 21)

YEAS

Members

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Aspin
Bateman
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fanning
Finley (Halldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gourde

Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Baird
Bernier
Blancy
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooze
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeschen
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Gosal
Grewal

Harper
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Holler
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Neill Gordon
Oliver
Paradis
Pouliève
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Richardson
Saxton
Seckback
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Troitter
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Business of Supply

Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Hoeppner
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Monegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Opitz
Payne
Preston
Rajotte
Read
Richards
Rickford
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson

Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— — 156

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Brosscau
Caron
Charlton
Chisholm
Chow
Clarcy
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dussault
Eyking
Fortin
Fry
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélanger
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brisson
Byrne
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Codere
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Foote
Freeman
Garneau
Genest
Giguère

Adjournment Proceedings

Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogueh
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassania	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	Layton
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
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Stewart	Stoffor
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Trudeau	Turnel
Valériote— 137	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Bill read the third time and passed)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1935)

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government was required to submit two greenhouse gas emissions reports, one to the United Nations and one to Parliament. The government told the UN that its climate change policies were up to 10 times more effective than what it told Parliament. I, therefore, asked the minister to tell us which report was accurate and who ordered the changes.

The minister responded that the two reports were based on two different compilations of data. In reality, not so much two different data sets but rather data, and an omission of data, from the oil sands.

To be generous, the report to the UN offered data from different categories that incorporated oil sands data but there was no detailed breakdown as the minister answered.

The minister then went on to say that the government reported that in 2009 the oil sands contributed 6.5% of Canada's total emissions. This statistic, however, was actually only provided by Environment Canada after it was questioned about the missing information in the report to the UN.

The minister's own office later confirmed that his comments were not accurate. I, therefore, suggested last Wednesday that the minister should retract his comments in a point of order following question period, and said:

Knowing what he does now, will the minister now rise, admit his answer yesterday was wrong, correct the record, and [apologize]?

Last Thursday, I said:

Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday the Minister of the Environment told this House that the oil sands industry contributed 6.5% of Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions in the government's report to the United Nations.

The minister's own office has confirmed that his comments were not true.

I then repeated the same question from Wednesday:

Will the minister, knowing what he does now, rise, admit his answer was wrong, correct the record, and fully apologize?

Instead of apologizing, the minister responded, "My colleague is still in the environmental weeds on this question". I used to teach climate change, climatology and meteorology at the university, and consulted to Environment Canada. I was also a lead author for Canada on the intergovernmental panel on climate change.

The so-called weeds matter, data matters, facts matter, methodology matters and conclusions really matter, particularly when two reports which do the same thing reach very different results, results that vary by 10 times.

Scientists take a consistent approach. I still have the same questions. Why was oil sands data omitted from the UN report and who ordered the changes? Who ordered the scientists to use different approaches to get two very different answers, one that made the government look better than its actual performance and that could be presented to the world, and a second that fit the government's ideology and played well to its base in Canada?

The world knows about Canada's oil sands. The data should have been presented clearly in the report to the UN and the methodology should have been the same in the two reports.

If the government had a reason for leaving out the data, it should have been accountable and transparent and explained why in the report.

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since this is the first time I have had the opportunity to address the member opposite, I would like to congratulate her on her appointment as critic on this file. I look forward to working with her on the environment committee.

I would like to remind the House that the two reports to which the member has referred have two very separate and distinct purposes.

Adjournment Proceedings

The report to the UN is Canada's National Inventory Report and is the authoritative measure on Canada's performance on greenhouse gas emissions for the years 1990 through 2009. The 2011 report, like all previous annual National Inventory Reports, is fully compliant with Canada's international greenhouse gas reporting obligations.

The report to Parliament is the 2011 climate change plan for the purposes of the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act. It is compiled to meet the obligation of the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act and, as such, has a focus only on government measures that will lead to greenhouse gas reductions during the Kyoto reference period from 2008 to 2012.

The main reason for the difference between the two estimates is therefore based on the simple fact that the National Inventory Report and the report under the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act have completely different reference points.

Consistent with its long-term historical focus, the National Inventory Report includes a high level, illustrative estimates of the possible impact on 2009 emissions from all federal incentives put in place since 1990.

The 2011 Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act report, on the other hand, examines only federal measures introduced since 2006. This represents a much smaller subset of government measures than is addressed in the National Inventory Report estimate. Further, the four megatonnes number for 2009 in the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act reflects the fact that we are taking a conservative approach to projecting the impacts of recent Government of Canada actions.

I would also like to point out for the member that there are many considerations that come into play in estimating emissions reductions from government measures. I would refer the member to the commentaries provided by the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy on past Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act reports for an overview of these considerations.

As the round table has also noted in its most recent commentaries, Environment Canada has made great strides in its approach to the measurement of the greenhouse gas reductions arising from government measures. This reflects the strong commitment of Environment Canada to provide the best possible estimates of greenhouse gas emissions and reductions to Canadians in an open and transparent manner.

Environment Canada will continue its active research into data and methodologies improvement for emissions reporting in order to determine the best way to account for and report GHG emissions to Canadians in all its public documents.

I hope this clarifies for my respective colleagues that following the requirements of both the United Nations Framework Convention on

Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act reporting obligations demands the use of different methodologies, scopes and time frames. Any comparison between the reports must, above all else, recognize this basic fact.

● (1940)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Environment Canada's explanation as to why oil sands information was omitted, namely that it was not certain about all of its calculations, raises concern.

Environment Canada has explained that it followed international guidelines that set emissions categories and that those guidelines did not require countries to report oil sands emissions as a separate category. However, Environment Canada did go beyond the UN's template to publish an estimate of oil sands emissions last year.

Good information about greenhouse gas emissions in the oil sands is especially critical this year, as the Minister of the Environment has said he will set regulations that include the oil sands.

Canada has scored the worst of all the developed countries that signed and ratified Kyoto. Canada must take real action on climate change. The first step is transparency and accountability. The UN report should have clearly explained why it omitted this fundamental data.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, we look forward to continuing to make progress toward our ambitious targets of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 17% from 2005 levels by 2020 through a sector by sector approach aligned with the U.S. where appropriate. We are a quarter of a way to this ambitious goal, but we still have a lot of hard work to do.

Consulting with stakeholders and our provincial, territorial and international partners, we have established regulations on renewable fuel content in gasoline to reduce tailpipe emissions. Soon we will announce regulations for the coal-fired electricity sector.

Our government has and will continue to make a priority of balancing the need for a strong economy with environmental protection. It is time for the member and her party to support these goals.

● (1945)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:45 p.m.)

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